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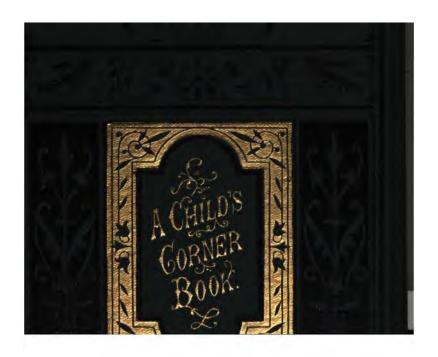
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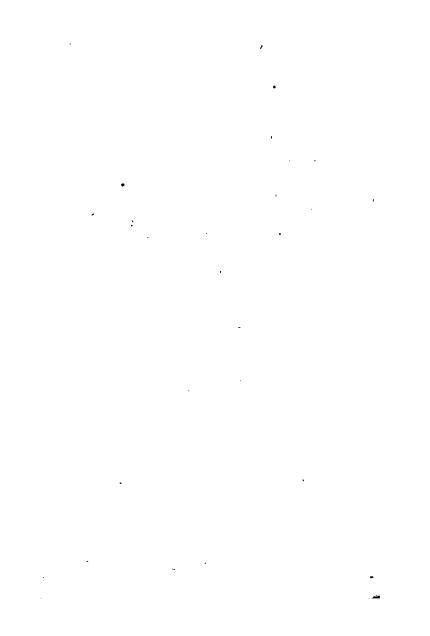


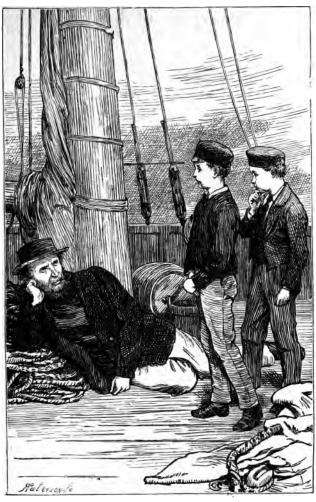
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'The narrowest squeak for my life I ever had, you'd like to hear about; would you, young Sir?'—CHILD'S CORNER BOOK, p. 155.

(Frontispiece.)

A CHILD'S CORNER BOOK

Stories for Boys and Girls.

By RICHARD ROWE

AUTHOR OF 'EPISODES IN AN OBSCURE LIFE,' 'JACK AFLOAT AND ASHORE,' 'HOITY TOITY,' 'THE BOYS OF AXLEFORD,'

'THE TOWER ON THE TOR,' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

WILLIAM P. NIMMO

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TO MY YOUNG READERS.

N this little book I have put together a few of the papers I have contributed to various magazines for youngsters and grown-up people.

It is greedy to eat one's cake in a corner, but I should be very pleased and proud if I were to see any unknown little boy or girl devouring my little book there. Children are the best judges of books for children; and, therefore, when I write for them, I am very glad if I can get a child's criticism on what I have written before I print it.

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LONELY JANE.



ID I ever know such a lonely little girl as you?—Yes, my pet, I once knew a little girl who was a hundred times as lonely; three hundred and sixty-five times as lonely, three hundred and sixty-six times in leap-year. You've had no one to play with for—let me see—yes, just five

minutes and nine fifty-billionths. Well, this little girl never had any one to play with her from year's end to year's end. She was a lonely little girl, such a very lonely little girl that the wonder is how I ever came to know her. I used to call her little Lonely Jane.

'How was she dressed l'—Oh, she used to wear a white sun-bonnet—something like the one you wear in the garden—and a pinafore, and a brown frock, and blue worsted stockings, and a pair of boots with leather laces like the dustman's.

'Hadn't she any gloves?'-No; I don't think she ever wore gloves. Her hands were as freckled as if somebody had dredged little bits of bran over them, and there were funny little baby-freckles, too, on the bridge of her nose. But she was a very pretty little girl for all that, with great brown eyes like a deer's, and a mouth like a rose-bud with a dew-drop in it. No, Miss Puss, she wasn't a bit like you. She wasn't such a madcap for one thing. I have seen her looking up into the sky as if she could see right into heaven, and I have seen her looking down on the grass as if she could see somebody thousands of miles off on the other side of the world-somebody she knew, and wasn't happy about. But, come, let me see if you can be quiet for ten minutes, and I'll tell vou all about her.

She lived on the road to Nowhere. Her grand-father's cottage wasn't near a wood, it was in a wood. There were trees behind and trees in front, with only a little grassy lane between,—not a regular lane. I once tried to walk through it in winter-time, and I got up to my knees in wet clay, that pulled one of my boots off like a bootjack; and one dry summer day, when I went up in a gig, it bumped about so that I kept on bobbing up like a Jack-in-the-box, and, if I hadn't kept tight hold of the rail, I should have shot out side-ways, like the clown jumping through the baker's window in a pantomime. You

could see scores of rabbits scampering about the lane at once; running backwards and forwards across it, and chasing one another in the middle, just as if they were playing at chevy. Sometimes, too, a great brown hare would come galloping along, with his long ears up like a donkey's. White clover grew in the lane, and little golden 'shoes and stockings.' I don't know why the country people call them so; perhaps they think they were meant for gouty fairies. Some people, you know, call calceolarias ladies' slippers.—Mamma would have a funny foot, wouldn't she, if it would fit a calceolaria, if it was ever so much bigger?

There was fern in the lane, too, and furze, and blackberry-bushes, and thistles, and toadstools, and broom, and broomrapes,—queer brown things that look like withered foxgloves, and make other plants feed them, just as the mistletoe feeds on the apple-trees. Half-way up the lane there was a great black pond, that looked like ink in a green ink-bottle. There were green glassy rushes in the pond, and tall brown reeds, and wicked-looking old water-rats, and speckled yellow frogs, that were always saying quawk, quawk, as if they had caught cold through getting their feet wet. Sometimes a smart cock-pheasant would come out of the wood and strut about in the lane, as if he wanted somebody to see his fine feathers; and yet if anybody did see him, he would stretch out his neck.

and run back like a lamplighter, or else he would spring up with a scream and a whir-r-r, right before your feet, as if he had been shut up in the ground, and had just found a hole to get out at. Sometimes, too, there were hen-pheasants in the lane, not nearly so smart as the cocks, but looking as dowdy as soldiers' wives in brown cotton gowns and faded silk neckerchiefs walking out with their husbands in full uniform. Now and then a little white-headed boy in leather buskins and a green smock-frock drove a flock of geese into the lane. They used to walk along in a line with their heads up like policemen, and then they would put down their heads and twitch up the grass sideways as if they were pulling out nails. They didn't come often, however, because the little boy was afraid the gipsies would steal them. Gipsies used sometimes to come into the lane, and make tents under the hedges with little brown cart-tilts, when they had turned out their dusty donkeys, with great wooden clogs on their forelegs, to stumble about among the tall, purple-blossomed thistles. The gipsies had something nicer than thistles to eat. I daresay little Tane used to wonder what it was, and how they got it, when she used to peep at them out of the wood in the evening.

They had two great black pots slung on poles over wood-fires, and such a nice hot scent of meat and rabbits and onions, and all kinds of nice things, came out of the pots that it made little Jane feel quite hungry. And yet all the gipsies, except the dirty, ragged, brown little boys and girls, with their great, sly, black eyes, would sometimes be asleep all day long. They never seemed to do any work, except make besoms out of the broom and rushes; and sometimes three or four of them would go away to sell their brooms, and some yellow-sprigged brown dishes and red pots and pitchers, they carried about in one of their donkey-carts. Little Jane often wanted to peep into the tents, and see what the gipsies were doing; but a great, shaggy, grey dog, with a funny little stump of a tail, was always chained between the shafts of the biggest cart, and he barked so that little Tane was frightened. She was rather afraid of the gipsies, too, because she had heard that they sometimes steal little girls, and thought that perhaps they would steal her ducks; and yet she was glad when the gipsies were there, because they kept the geese away. Some of the geese were very spiteful, and when they saw little Jane in the lane they would put down their heads, and make their necks as stiff and as straight as a ruler, and run at her, hissing like serpents-and give her quite hard bites, too, through her blue stockings. One of the ditches made a little pond, almost covered with green duckweed, in front of her grandfather's cottage, and that was where little Iane kept her ducks. They weren't really hers, but she liked

to call them so. There was a drake with a purple poll like velvet, and a sheeny-green neck like shot silk, a brown-speckled duck, a white duck, and a black duck with a vellow bill. Sometimes there was a fluffy little brood of ducklings, like balls of flannel; but as soon as they got any size, the grandfather used to kill them and take them to market. Little Jane used to cry when the ducklings were killed. She told me that she should like to love them 'so' (you often say that, Missy; how much does it mean?), but she was afraid to, because just when she was fondest of them grandfather was sure to wring their necks. Elder-trees and cranberry-bushes, with little berries like glass beads, hung over the duck-pond, and behind them was the garden, full of currant-bushes, and gooseberry-bushes, and columbine, and monk'shood, and wall-flowers, and monthly roses, and gillyflowers, and sweet-williams, and white and pink and purple convolvuluses, and tall hollyhocks that could peep into little Jane's bedroom. There were cabbages too, and potatoes, and onions that used to look like drumsticks when they were in seed, and balm, and marjoram, and borage, and golden-rod, planted about the corner where two old straw bee-hives stood, under a little penthouse, on a funny little form. was a crooked old apple-tree on one side of the cottage, with a whitewashed trunk, and props like an old man's crutches under its arms; and a Mayduke cherry-

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tree on the other, with kite-tails tied on to its branches to drive the birds away. It's too bad, isn't it, to grudge the poor birds a few cherries when they've killed the grubs?

'But what business have they to kill the grubs?'— Well, I suppose the grubs could say something for themselves, too, but we're talking now about little Jane. She wasn't a little grub. She had a very grubby little bedroom, though. There were two little lofts over the kitchen and the bedroom in her grandfather's cottage; you went up to them by a little ladder. There was a dusty old box, and a battered rusty lantern, and ever so many cobwebs in one; and little Lonely Jane slept in the other. She was not very tall, and yet she sometimes knocked her head against the sloping roof. If it had gone through, her face would have looked something like a moss-rose, for there were great patches of green moss on the brown thatch outside. The cottage was built of wood, just the colour of her grandfather's green-grey smockfrock, with pretty little lichens on the planks, like frost on window-panes. The chimney was made ot brick and clay; some of the bricks had tumbled down, and wall-flowers stuck out of it all round. it had been a little blacker, it would have looked like a Tack in the Green. This was where little Jane lived, with her grandfather and her grandmother, and the ducks, and the pigs that had a snug pigsty at the back of the cottage. Her grandfather was a woodman, hard at work all day. Her grandmother was very deaf, and rather cross to little Jane. Both grandfather and grandmother thought it hard that they should have to support her. She wanted to love them, but they wouldn't let her. They liked to keep her out of their sight as much as they could. Poor little Jane! It wasn't her fault; but her father had been transported, and had been very unkind to her mother, the old people's daughter.

So after breakfast, when little Jane had done any little jobs in the cottage or the garden that her grand-mother would let her do, and had brought her grand-mother drinking-water in an old broken pitcher, with a piece of string tied round it for a handle, from a spring a quarter of a mile off in the wood—a spring with sand like powdered silver, and pebbles like purple plums—poor little Jane had to ramble about alone all day, only going home to meals. Sometimes her grandmother would give her a slice of bread for dinner, and then she only went home when it was time for her to creep up into the little loft to bed.

The nearest church was four miles off, and her grandfather and grandmother hardly ever went there, and when they did go they never took little Jane. They were ashamed of her, poor little girl, because her father had been a bad man. Her mother, however, had taught her to read a little before she died,

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and Jane had her mother's old New Testament. It was very old and yellow, and rather dogs'-eared; but it had a sweet scent, because there were ever so many faded rose-leaves between the pages.

I met little Jane sometimes when I was wandering about in the wood, and had a talk with her. The bits in the Bible, she told me, that she liked best were those 'about folks being so happy in heaven, and how Jesus was so kind to little boys and girls, and to wicked people when they were sorry.' She had a little book of ballads, too, and could almost say the 'Babes in the Wood' off by heart.

'They was better off nor me,' she said ;—she hadn't learnt grammar, you know; -- 'cos I've got ne'er a brother to go about wi' me.' So poor little Lonely Jane tried to make friends with the trees and the flowers, and the birds and the bees. She loved all birds, except the geese that bit her heels, and the kestrels, because she had seen them kill linnets. She was very vexed, though, that the robin-redbreasts, that buried the poor little children with leaves, should be so quarrelsome. She wanted me to tell her whether I didn't think they might be only fond of fighting for fun. Pheasants, too, she didn't much like to look at. Her father had been a poacher, and it was 'along o' they,' she said, 'that he had got sent across the sea.' There was one place in the wood, she told me, she couldn't 'abear to go anigh—the

great pond grandfather said father had knocked the keeper into.' I went there one day. It was such a lonely place, with water-hens swimming about, and long hairy-leaved all-heal dipping its red blossoms into the still, green water. The all-heal hadn't been able to heal the wound the poor keeper got from the butt-end of the poacher's gun. Poor little Jane used to look very sad when she talked about her father. She tried to say all the good she could of him. 'He used to gie me sweeties, and sometimes he was as kind hurt a worm. She didn't like to see the woodmen barking the trees in May, because she fancied the trees couldn't 'like to have their skins took off.' She showed me once a field-mouse's nest. I was going to take one of the funny little fat baby mice out of the soft warm bundle they had made of themselves all jumbled together higgledy-piggledy, heads and tails; but Jane asked me not to, because its mother would miss it. 'Grandfather kills 'em,' she said, "cos they spoils the trees, he says; but they seem sich mites o' things to do mischief, doesn't they?' She would never show me a bird's nest until I had promised not to take any of the eggs or the young ones. You would have called it 'jolly' to be able to wander about with little Jane. She could have taken you straight to almost any kind of bird's nest you wanted to see. She would have shown you a plump snug, warm little robin's nest, with five little white red-streaked eggs, peeping out beneath a tuft of primrose leaves from a hole in a mossy little wall; or a great gaping blackbird's nest in the hazel bushes, with the green spotted eggs looking as if they were addled with cold on the uncomfortable clay floor; or funny little Mrs. Jenny Wren giving their dinner to a score of Master Wrens and Miss Wrens, all gaping very rudely; or nearly grown-up Master and Miss Water-hen taking their little brothers and sisters out for a walk, or building them comical little nests among the reeds. You could tell a bantam's egg from an ostrich's, perhaps, but little Jane could tell which were missel-thrush's and which were songthrush's. One day she showed me what she said was a magpie's nest, almost at the top of a pine-tree, but just then a squirrel came cantering along on three paws, with an armful of dry grass, and up the tree he scampered with it. Little Jane could not help laughing when I asked her whether the squirrel was going to tuck the little magpies in with his blanket; and then she told me what I didn't know before, that Master Squirrel, for all he looks so brisk, and whisks his tail and cocks his ears so saucily, and scolds the birds, and lets his nutshells tumble on one's hat just as if he had taken aim at the crown to hear the rattle. is a very lazy little chap. Instead of building a house outright for himself, he likes to carry his furniture into

an old magpie's nest. The cuckoo, you know, is another idle thing. You've heard it sometimes; but little Tane could have shown it to you, flitting about from tree to tree, with a mob of little birds after it, all chattering at once, just as if they were saying, 'Ain't you ashamed of yourself, you great lazy creature, poking your beggar-brats into honest people's houses?' She could have shown you, too, the green woodpecker tapping away like a carpenter; and, when you fancied you heard thunder ever so far off, she could have taken you to the foot of the very tree on which the woodpigeon was cooing. You needn't have been afraid of getting wet, for little Jane would have said, 'The chickweed's shuttin' up,' and so you could have got back before the shower came on. If you had been with her, you could have gathered sackfuls of cowslips-paigles, she called them-and wild hyacinths, and primroses, and violets, and harebells, and raggedrobin, and anemones, and ground ivy. She would have taken you to little ponds as green as purses and as yellow as gold with water-lilies, and ditches as blue as the sky with forget-me-nots, and brooks quite covered with watercress, and hedges all a tangle of holly, and May, and blackthorn, and wild clematis, and pale wild honeysuckle, and dogrose, and white bellbind, and purple-berried nightshade. You might have helped her gather mushrooms, and sloes, and blackberries, and crimson bilberries, and scarlet barberries for her grandmother to make ketchup, and pies, and jam, and jelly with. Poor little Lonely Jane would have been glad to have you to talk to, though you are such a chatterbox. She was glad to have even the pigs, though they could only grunt to her. She used to drive her grandfather's into the wood in the autumn to feed on the fallen acorns, and she said that they were 'company like,' and that when she was 'lookin' after they,' she didn't 'fare to feel so ashamed like as if she had no one as belonged to her.' The last time I saw poor little Jane she was driving the pigs home. One saucy little curly-tailed plum-pudding pig was giving her a great chase. He seemed to know that she wouldn't beat him if she did catch him.

Next spring, when I began to take my walks in the wood again, I could see nothing of little Jane; so one day when I met her grandfather, I asked him about her.

'Dead and buried,' the old man said, 'and I didn't think we should ha' been so sorry to be rid o' the little lass. Last winter one o' them gipsy brats tumbled through the Black Pool, and she went on th' ice to ketch hold on un. They hooked the little brown beggar out, but my poor gal's little Jane was drownded.'

She is buried in a green little churchyard, just out of the shade of the trees. It was a soft, bright spring

evening when I saw her grave. Little children were sitting on it, singing and weaving daisy-chains; and, though she was dead, poor little Lonely Jane, with those merry little ones about her, didn't seem so lonely as she had been when she was wandering in the wood.





THE PET POLYANTHUS.

I.-COUNTRY AND TOWN.

T had been a sweet spring day in the fresh country. Willow leaves and poplar leaves had rustled and turned from green to silver, and from silver back again to green; and yellow catkins had danced mertily in the soft west wind,—around floury drowsy old watermills, purring with

the sleepy satisfaction of basking cats; and along the banks of watercourses, just ruffled enough to ripple against their reeds, winding through grass that might almost have been heard to grow. The ditches in the water-meadows had been blue with mouse-ear and bright with marsh-marigold; buttercups, vying with the grass in growth, and as yet foremost in the race, had shaken their gorgeously gleaming goblets over the lush herbage, and lady's smock in streaks and patches of pale lilac had looked almost pensive—like

a fragile sister smiling in the midst of rollickinglylaughing boys-surrounded by all that wealth of triumphantly luxuriant green and gold. meadows had been tufted with cowslips, and the red poppy had begun to spot the virgin green of the young corn. The young leaves of the over-arching hedgerow trees had chequered lanes, still moist from last night's balmy showers, with ever rippling sun and shade, and sloe blossoms had been sprinkled like milk over the blackthorn. The tiny heavenly blue speedwell had peeped from the grass of the hedgebanks like the eye of some fairy made perfectpurged from the last lingering taint of elfin malice, the richly-coloured spadix of quaint 'lords and ladies' had peered from its spathes amongst the glossy ferns, and primroses were scattered everywhere—as if the Angel of the Flowers had flown over the land, sprinkling them broadcast from her piled-up, inexhaustible apronful. On hedge-bank, in musets made by the doubling hare, nodding above rabbit-holes, in damp wall-crannies and rotten gateposts turning into touchwood, on country graves clustered round silent little churches, hushed as a mother sits silent surrounded by the cots of her sleeping little ones; leaning over to look at their own sweet faces in brook and milllade, and, deep in the woods, shed like lavish tribute of pale gold at the velvet-shod feet of oak and elm. with scarce any one to behold their beauty but the

birds. And in the woods, too, the frail anemone had trembled, the wild hyacinth had hidden the grass with sheets of blue like little ponds, and white and blue violets, covered with dull leaves, had sent forth fragrance like music from an unseen choir. there had been real ear-music also, sweet melodies, rich harmonies, made by the wind and the waters, and the peacefully restless leaves. The time for the singing of blackbirds had come, the voice of the woodpigeon was heard in the land, and the cuckoo had been calling all day long; and now the woodsorrel had gone to sleep, closing its veined eyelids beneath the dew's good-night kiss, and the country cottages seemed to be going to sleep also, as light after light disappeared from their little lattices, leaving them standing dim in a luscious confusion of cool fragrance steaming from invisible wallflower and lilac, stock and honeysuckle.

Such had been the day in the country. Now let us turn to the town.

A red-faced root-seller, clad in dusty, greasy corduroy, was trundling his barrow along thronged, noisy High Street, Shoreditch. The barrow was still heavily laden, and instead of looking lovingly at his lovely wares, the root-seller growled at them, and that very vague personality, 'them as 'adn't bought 'em.' He would have shaken his fist at his flowers, if his barrow had not kept both hands out of mischief.

'Where was my wits this mornin' at the Garding? If I'd on'y a-knowed, ketched me they would a-buyin' sich rubbage. Leastways, rubbage some on ye'll be afore to-morrer, stived up in my place, an' I hain't got a moke even, to give yer to for green meat. Darn the folks! They're ready enough to want to buy thinx as yer 'aven't got, an' then when a cove goes out o' his way jest to haccommodate 'em, they won't buy nuffink on yer. It's enough to haggerawate a saint, it is.'

At any rate, the root-seller, who probably did not profess to be a saint, was aggravated, and gave his barrow such a spiteful push forward, that all the drooping blossom-heads swayed to and fro like bells. A flower's temper cannot be ruffled, however, and on they jolted, smiling as sweetly as ever in the gas-light—their pure smile a strange contrast to other 'beneath the gas' smiles they passed—galvanic grins from Death's heads, with eyes still left to leer, and skin to be ruddled with rouge.

''Sh oh, fine fish oh-oh!' ''Reel fresh silver mackareel, mackar-oh, mackar-oh-oh!' ''Live, 'live, all alive oh!' hoarsely or shrilly shouted the street fishmongers, standing beside stalls lit with flaring, smoky oil-flames, and covered with slimy flat fish, flabby sections of stale salmon, mackerel certainly not as fresh as the daisy to which their vendors likened them, tiny crabs 'just out of the pot'—a day or two before, piles of

muddy mussels, and huge conger-eels, as appetiteprovoking as young boa-constrictors. The streetsellers of the fresher-looking vegetables-green, and red, and white-advertised their wares as loudly as the fishmongers, and announced that they had 'Sold again, and got the money,' with as stentorian a pride. The sellers of hot eels and whelks, fried fish, ovsters extracted from vast shells like amorphous lumps of mortary stone, trotters, hot peas and vinegar, pastry, sweetstuff, ginger-beer, oranges, and other al fresco consumed comestibles, added to the din. 'Buy, buy, buy! what d'ye buy!' resounded on all sides. On through the little vulgar Vanity Fair-if a mart in which both buyers and sellers are hard struggling for daily bread may be so named—went the grumpy root-seller's flowers nid-nodding their beautiful heads. 'All a-blowin', all a-growin'!' he bawled, but still no customers came. With another and a more emphatic growl he raised the handles of his barrow again, and pushed on past vendors—some vociferous, others too depressed to utter more than a melancholy mumble -of ballads, blacking, bonnet-shapes, boot-laces, braces, Bromwicham jewellery, cards, chimney ornaments, combs, crockery, cruet-stands, dolls, fusees, glass (including empty porter-tumblers with deceptive show of foaming drink, and little looking-glasses), hooks and eyes, Tews'-harps, lace-collars, lucifer matches, medals, metal-spoons, money-boxes, musical-

boxes, needles, nutmeg-graters, penholders, peppercastors, pincushions, ribbons, seals, stationery, studs, tape, tea-caddies, thimbles, tinware, toys, and tooth-In the country, cottagers were snoring in their first sleep, but the street-market still brawled on. Although some of them have to rise with the lark, poor Londoners cannot afford to lie down with the lamb. A crowd had gathered in front of a druggist's shop, whose bulbous coloured bottles sent out curious gleams of red, green, yellow, and purple on the throng, to watch—or, rather, not to be able to see what was being done to a run-over man who had been carried in there. Improving the occasion, the rootseller once more began to shout 'All a-blowin', all a-growin',' and this time he did get a customer. A plump woman, whose plumpness had kept her, owing to fear of suffocation, from pressing on with the throng, and who consequently had been left so completely in its outskirts that she could not even fancy that she saw what was going on inside the shop, and who had grown tired of the contradictory rumours that were flying about,—' Now, he's a-bleedin' of 'em' -' No, he ain't.' 'He's a cuttin' off 'is leg'-' Cut off your grandmother? It's the witals as is hinjured,' etc. etc.—turned to examine the root-seller's stock, and succeeded at last in cheapening a 'daffadilly' that had taken her fancy. The seller was in one sense glad to sell it at any price, and yet the having

to sell it at a sacrifice did not improve his temper. When, therefore, a bent old man, with a strip of copper under his arm, but scarce a copper in his pocket, encouraged by the woman's success, asked the price of humbler flowers to which he pointed, the root-seller answered with a snappish sneer, 'What's this? and what's that? Why carn't yer give 'm a name? Ye're hold enough. Well, this 'ere's a Polly Anthis. Proper price 's a penny, but I don't mind lettin' you 'ave it for a naypenny, guv'nor.' The old man looked longingly at the flower, but still he lingered.

'Take yer time, take yer time,' said the root-seller.
'A naypenny's too waluable a property to be made ducks and drakes on. P'r'aps you'll drop me a line when you've *quite* made up yer mind; I must be movin'!'

'She shall 'ave it,' said the old man to himself, with an emphasis which showed that a true word had been spoken in jest when the root-seller had intimated that, in the old man's eyes, a halfpenny was an amount not to be parted with without serious consideration. His hand dived and brought up the coin required from the depths of a trouser-pocket. He received his polyanthus, and carefully wrapping his pocket-handkerchief round the earth that clung to the roots, he hurried home with his treasure. He had asked some anxious questions

about the proper mode of culture. 'Oh stick un in and water un, an' she's bound to thrive if she don't die fust,' the root-seller had oracularly answered. 'What a hold soft it is,' he had continued, as he trundled on his barrow. 'Makin' as much fuss hover a naypenny Polly Anthis as if 'e'd a-bought a guinea pine-apple!'

II.-POTTED.

WHEN East-end clergymen get up Window Garden Shows, they sometimes publish little charts with sailing instructions for the benefit of visitors not acquainted with their districts; a necessary precaution, since some of the schoolrooms in which these shows are held seem to be playing at hide-and-seek. When you come upon them at last, they take you by surprise, and you start back as if, according to rule, they ought to rush out and chase you 'home.' In such an out-of-the-way corner the house was situated to which the old man with the strip of copper and the polyanthus bent his steps:—out of one main thoroughfare into another, into a side street, into a narrower one, running at right angles, through an alley, across a lane, and through a couple of adjoining courts into another lane. The night air, so balmy in the quiet country, reeked of ashes, herring-heads, and decaying vegetables, in that noisy cul de sac. Most of the inhabitants had ceased for the day from their

wretchedly-paid labours, and were sitting or standing in their doorways, 'getting a breath of fresh air,' as they called it. If the outside air of the lane was comparatively fresh, what must the air inside its rooms have been? Some of the loungers were gossiping in the low, querulous tone which tells of years of hopeless toil unrelieved by any hope for the future. The sudden warmth of the weather had made others more actively peevish, and there being no privacy in such a place in which contact with annoying neighbours can be avoided, and ruffled tempers have time to sleek their disordered feathers, some very spiteful wrangling was going on across the road and between next-door neighbours. Outside the dingy, disreputable corner public-house, which looked as if it had never been painted or had its windows cleaned since it obtained its licence, and whose dark den of a parlour, with its table scored with stale glutinous arcs and circles of spilt beer, would have been just not the place for the concoction of a burglary, because it looked the very place for the hatching of such a scheme; outside the public-house there was an agitated little crowd staggeringly revolving, with shouts of derision or encouragement, round two raving women, whose nervously clutching claw-like fingers would ere long, doubtless, be enabled to let off their excess of energy in scratching each other's skinny cheeks and pulling out skimp handfuls of each other's scanty back hair.

The weary old man passed on to his 'home,' a ground-floor room in a small two-floored house, every other room in which was more thickly peopled than his 'front-parlour'—the work, living, and sleeping room for only his little orphan granddaughter and himself.

'No; Lizzy ain't come back yet,' one of the women lounging in the passage said to him.

He seemed disappointed, but brightened up the next minute, muttering to himself, 'P'r'aps I shall have time to stick it in the pot afore she comes.' When he was inside his little room he closed the shutters to make it 'snug' as he called it, as soon as he had groped for a candle and a box of matches. When the candle was lighted it showed two beds. three rush-bottomed chairs, one of them tilted against the wall because minus a leg; a little chest of drawers, with loops of greasy cord for handles; a number of fly-spitten yellow woodcuts and lithographs, with a few coloured prints pasted on the walls; a little crockery, etc.; and a low, worm-eaten, tool-furrowed working-bench, with a tiny vice, a tiny anvil, a tiny melting-ladle, and other miniatures of metal-workers' tools. Taking his rusty fire-shovel, the old man went out into the back-yard, and presently came back with a shovelful of what he fondly imagined to be 'gardenmould,' and an old broken flower-pot. Stopping the gap in its side with an oyster-shell, the old man filled

the pot with his precious mould, and then, scooping out a crater, popped in the polyanthus, taking scrupulous care to preserve every grain of native earth clinging to the roots. Then he watered the flower, and having placed the pot on a coarse white teasaucer, put it inside his one cupboard, leaving the door ajar, 'lest,' as he said to himself, 'the poor thing should be smothered.'

Then the old man gave a chuckle, opened the door of his room again, and sat down to wait for his granddaughter. To wile away the time, he took his black pipe off the mantel-piece, and lighted with difficulty the remnant of half-consumed tobacco left at the bottom. He had just finished that not very fragrant or refreshing smoke, and was wondering whether he could afford to recharge with half-a-pipeful of fresh tobacco, when in came little Lizzy. Not a pretty child-children born and bred in East End hovels are rarely pretty, although, as if nature wanted to give even them a chance, they often come into the world chubby little rogues enough. Poor little mites! babies, according to childish belief, did fall from Fairy Land, what a dreary tumble theirs would be! This little girl was sallow and skinny, but she had a pair of wonderful big, black eyes—full of love for the old man, but pathetically clouded with precocious care.

'Oh, Granny,' she cried; perhaps she called the

old man Granny from an unconscious wish to express her feeling that he was mother as well as father. sisters, aunts, cousins, everything to her. 'Oh. Granny,' she cried (and she began to cry in another sense, as she put down what looked like a miniature unpainted tea-chest on the bench), 'the lady's gone into the country, and the servants wouldn't believe as she'd ordered 'em. The man I spoke to fust was as cross as two sticks, but then there come another. suppose he was some sort o' servant too, but he was dressed all in black, smarter than our parson; he was a bit kinder; he give me a penny when I told him what a way I'd come, and sent me to a gentleman ever so fur furder, as managed, he said, the lady's poor people's business for her when she was away. But he wouldn't believe me neither. He said, as the lady 'adn't told him nuffink about it, and folks was al'ays a-tryin' to himpose on 'er, and he'd a good mind to give me in charge to the pollis. Yes, he did, Granny; so I 've brought 'em back.'

The old man had been enjoying in anticipation the surprise he had in store for his little girl, but now the roguish smile faded from his lips—'went in' like suddenly clouded sunshine. He looked very blank as he took off the lid of the little chest, and brought out and ranged upon his bench a toy brass fireplace and fender with a punched-out pattern, a brass boxiron, a copper coal-scuttle with a copper scoop, a

copper warming-pan, saucepan, stewpan, pail, fish-kettle, tea-kettle, coffee-noggin, and coffee-pot. The tiny things were all as conscientiously finished as if made for grown-up use, the inside of the cooking utensils had been neatly tinned, and the outside copper scoured until it gleamed like gold, even in the feeble light of Granny's long-wicked, perspiring, yellow candle.

'It's hard,' said the old man. 'Why, the stuff cost me three bob, and I'd made so sure I'd should git it to-night that I've popped my coat to buy some more. An' then, there's the money for the makin'. I don't doubt the lady meant kind when she ordered 'em, but hout o' sight, hout o' mind, yer see. 'Taint to be expected she'd think much o' sich thinx, when she'd once give the order for 'em, hout o' charity like. But it makes a deal o' diff'rence to hus, Liz. And, arter all, it ain't charity. They're real good honest work-no scampin'. She couldn't git as good at the shops, an' they'd cost more. But then, yer see, she didn't want 'em, on'y to say somethin' kind to poor folks as 'ad to live all their lives in sich a place as If they'd been diamonds as she'd wanted to go to her parties in, 'twould ha' been different. Pack 'em up, an' put 'em by for 'er, Liz. doubt I shall git my money—if she on'y 'appens to think on it.'

The old man said this very bitterly, and then,

feeling relieved by his sarcasm, added more cheerfully, 'But there, grizzlin' won't mend it. Take the candle, Liz, and bring us out some supper.'

When Liz opened the cupboard door, and saw the polyanthus, she almost dropped the candle in her delighted surprise. When she learnt that the flower had been bought for her to be her 'very own,' she kissed the old man as richer grandfathers do not get kissed for far more costly gifts. It was the one present little Liz had ever received, and she had so longed to be the proud possessor of a flower in a pot. The polyanthus was brought out and placed on the bench between them, whilst the old man and the little girl ate their dry bread and oily fried plaice—fried just in time to pass anyhow as eatable. Liz watered her flower out of her own mug that it might feel that 'it was having its supper too;' and when she went to bed she placed it on the window-ledge at the bedhead—if a mattress on the floor, and a bundle of miscellaneous ragged cloth and calico, can be said to have a head.

Poor, however, as was the couch over which it watched, the polyanthus gave the little sleeper golden dreams. Its gold-embroidered velvet took strangely magnificent shapes in little Liz's night visions, and when she awoke next morning it was with a sense that some one—at first she could not remember who—had come to lodge with Granny who would be her

friend—not to be loved just in the same way as dear old Granny, but in a different way almost as much. She gave a fond little nod, and said good-morning to her polyanthus when she turned and saw it. It was a humble angel, but by it the good God had sent brightness into little Liz's life.

III.—RE-POTTED.

LITTLE LIZ was on the books of the parish school, but she was not a very regular attendant, and her school-pence had often to be forgiven. Granny was so poor that he frequently could not pay them, and he often required Liz's services to sell his wares for him in the streets, or to take them to shops and private customers from whom he occasionally got orders. Besides this, Liz did the tidying up—such as it was of their little room. It was very little leisure Liz enjoyed, but she thought herself quite 'a lady' in comparison with the girls next door, who, almost ever since they could stand alone, had been hard at work all day long-sometimes on Sundays as well as weekdays-helping their mother to make match-boxes at 21d. per gross, the makers finding their own paste. Now Liz not unfrequently got a walk to Victoria Park with Granny on Sundays, and on week-days was sometimes able to snatch a few minutes for 'Tiggy, tiggy, touch-wood,' or 'Here we go round the mulberry bush,' in the cramped square of dingy gravel at the side of the girls' schoolroom, dignified with the title of its playground. At school, moreover, Liz had made—not exactly a friend—the polyanthus was the only friend, so to speak, of her own age Liz had ever made—an acquaintance, then, Clarry Delille, the daughter of a silk-weaver in a neighbouring street. The silk-weaver was a flower-fancier, and Clarry had always at least one flower 'of her own,' which she had been very fond of talking about and showing somewhat ostentatiously to Liz. As a maiden, therefore, who has at last received an offer hastens to communicate the important news to sister or cousin who has been for months engaged, and who has given herself airs in consequence, so eagerly did Liz hurry to school with her intelligence; but it chanced that Clarry was not at school that morning. after school, therefore, Liz hastened to the street in which the silk-weaver lived; a dark drab street, once entirely peopled by the craftsmen whom the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes sent over to England to weave tissues of daintiest colour and most delicate texture, in what is now the most dismal part of London. but which then looked out on green fields, bright wild flowers, and shady oaks and elms; a street which, although no longer exclusively weaver-tenanted, still tells of their past and present occupancy in its oblong many-paned casements and the big yellow shuttles projecting as trade-signs from the door-posts of makers

of smaller ones for use. In Bethnal Green the staircase of a house is as public as the common stair of a 'land' in the Edinburgh Canongate or Cowgate. Liz trotted up to a first-floor, and without knocking walked into a light room in which Delille, a spare bright-eyed man, sat at his clacking loom. was very little furniture in the room, but there were ferns and flowers; a creeper in a pot hung over the loom, and some coloured prints of flowers—which had once probably illustrated a book on botany, but had been picked up loose and at second-hand—were tin-tacked, neatly bound in green silk, upon the walls. Light was too precious to allow the long front window to be blinded in any way, but the window of the smaller room at the back was barred with sloping strings, round which canary-plant and 'nasturtiums' were twining, and outside the window stood a row of flowers in pots inside a miniature fence and gate, painted green and white. Clarry came running from this inner room to hear Liz's news.

- 'Only a penny Polly Anthis,' exclaimed Clarry, so contemptuously, that Liz felt ready to cry.
- 'It was on'y a naypenny Granny gave for it,' she said, 'but it's a real beauty, so there.'
- 'I've got a fuchsia, and it's a-goin' to the show,' Clarry went on.
- 'Come, Clarry, you made a deal of the first polyanthus I gave you,' said her good-natured father;

'don't you run down the little gal's flower, but go and have a look at it.'

As they were going out of the room, he added, 'I should like to have a look at your pretty flower myself, little un, so bring it round.'

Liz soon came back with it, exclaiming proudly, 'Ain't she a beauty? Granny's most as fond of it as I am; he's been a-waterin' of it hever since I was away.'

The silk-weaver laughed.

'She is a real beauty,' he said. 'Grandfather got a bargain when he got her for a ha'penny. But you tell him from me that he'll kill her with kindness if he goes on like that. Here, Clarry, you clear out this slush and cinders, all except just round the roots, and put some of our earth in. You can empty that pot there—it's got nothing in. Mind you crock it well. Stop, though, you may as well give her pot and all. The little un has got a great bit out of the side.' So the polyanthus was carefully re-potted, and sent back with strict instructions as to her water allowance. Granny said that it seemed like stinting the poor critter—and water anyhow, leastways as much as a little thing like that would want, they had got to give away.

But although Liz had a greater respect than ever for Granny, as a flower-giver, she had sense enough to prefer the counsels of the silk-weaver as a flower-trainer.

IV.—OFFERING UP ISAAC.

Granny for a day or two worked hard at the copper he had got by pawning his coat. The weather was so warm that, even if he had had a coat, he would have worked in his shirt-sleeves; but when he went out in search of a purchaser for the new copper set he had finished, a cold, damp wind was blowing, threatening rain. He came back with the price of his set in his pocket, and Liz's eyes sparkled when she saw the shillings counted out on the work-bench. Greedy for money the poor are sometimes called; but is it strange that their eyes gloat over it? How much, in their estimation, a shilling will buy! No wonder, then, that the chink of silver sounds to them like a whispered 'Be of good comfort' from guardian angels. But Granny found no comfort as he splashed down the coin. He had come home drenched to the skin. 'There's some one a-keepin' walkin' hover my grave,' he said, as time after time he shivered, shaking as a horse shakes in its harness. His teeth chattered; he lifted his limbs as if they were made of lead; his head ached as if an axe were splitting it; his back and loins smarted as if he had been flogged with a cat-o'nine-tails. Soaked as he was, he would have crawled between his bedclothes, had not Liz with difficulty pulled off his leaky, sodden boots, and brought him a clean shirt; he had a change of linen. When he

had curled himself up, still shivering, in bed, she blew up the dying fire to dry his clothes, and made him a cup of 'tea. He drank it eagerly—his hand shaking so that his little granddaughter had to hold the cup to his lips-but turned with loathing from a slice of bread. Liz grew frightened as she watched him turning and tossing-now flinging off the bedclothes, and the next moment making a covetous clutch at them; moan-moaning, but never speaking a word to her. At last he fell into a troubled sleep, and the little girl crept supperless to her own bed. She noticed that the flower was drooping, and stole back on tip-toe for the water-jug. 'Oh, Polly!' she said, as she poured the water into the thirsty earth, 'if Granny's a-goin' to die, what shall us do?' Dreary as she felt, it was a comfort to have her flower to talk to. She did not seem so lonely in her grief. She put the polvanthus on the chair before her when she knelt to say her prayers, and sobbed herself off to sleep with her arm round the pot, as she might have cuddled a little sister.

She scarcely recognised her grandfather's voice when she woke.

'Yes, you can sleep,' he said, snappishly, 'snorin' away like a pig, and there I've 'ad to git out o' bed a dozen times an' more for a drink o' water. I do believe you 'eard me a-callin', but you was too lazy to stir.'

Liz glanced at her flower, as if she were ashamed

that it should hear him talking in a way so unlike himself, and murmured, apologetically, 'Poor old Granny, he can't be right in 'is 'ead.' He was wrong enough in his head in one sense. His brain seemed to be squeezed flat under a pile of hundredweights. Hot flushes came into his face; his eyes were bloodshot; an invisible python seemed to be coiled, crunching, round his body, and every time he coughed he felt as if a red-hot rake were scarifying the inside of his chest. Frightened little Liz got him some tea. and then hurried off to the Mission-house. It was too early for the clergyman of the parish to be there, and, indeed, he was out of town, but the housekeeper listened to the little maiden's melancholy story. A friend, who had looked in to see the housekeeper, and who was the plump purchaser of the daffodil, cut the doleful narrative short with a kindly-abrupt 'There, there, don't cry, little gal, as if yer gran'father was a-goin' to die afore dinner. It's hinfluenzy, that's all; I knows it by the sintums. My old man was down with it week afore last, and a precious plague he were. Talk about women, Mrs. Green! It's the men as gits into a fuss and a fume if on'y their little finger aches. They'll bluster so long as they gits their beer; but put 'em down on the flat o' their backs, and a chicken-'earteder set I never see, and that fractious, they're as bad as a babby a-cuttin' its teeth!'

'Yes, Mrs. Bloice, you're right, mum,' assented Mrs. Green, 'as I've good call to know, though he's at rest now, pore dear, and so I'll say no more. It's lonesome to be a widdy, but then you do git your rest broke in a way that ain't pleasant when your 'usband's al'ays a-ailin'.'

'Well, well,' answered Mrs. Bloice, 'my old man ain't al'ays a-ailin', and I've no wishes to git rid on 'im yet, though he do plague me at times. The doctor ought to be told about this pore old chap. If you'd see to that, Mrs. Green, I'll go round with the little gal, and sort the pore old feller. I'm used to hinfluenzy. It runs in our family like—leastways on Bloice's side.'

Mrs. Bloice, inconsistently, seemed proud that her husband's family should have an ailment 'running' in it. Gout would have been more aristocratical, but influenza was better than nothing. When she reached Granny's, Mrs. Bloice soon got a couple of bricks out of the backyard, heated them, and spare flannel being scarce or rather non-extant in that humble home, wrapped them up in the end of a blanket, and applied them to Granny's feet. Then she sent Liz out to buy some bran, generously giving her the money for it, and when it had been fetched, made two poultices, which she put upon the old man's neck and chest. They relieved him a little, and Mrs. Bloice looked round her with great complacency.

'That's a uncommon pretty Polly Anthis,' she remarked.

'It's mine; Granny give it me for my own, mum,' said Liz, her sad eyes brightening at hearing her pet praised.

'Well, I tell ye what,' Mrs. Bloice went on, 'I'll give ye sixpence for it. It's a deal more than it's worth, but I'm oncommon fond o' flowers, and I like to do a kind haction, and the pore old man looks as if 'e'd be glad of a sixpence.'

Liz's lips quivered. 'Oh, please, 'm,' she stammered, 'I never had a flower, not in a pot, afore, and please, 'm,'—and she began to cry. Mrs. Bloice was huffed.

'Oh, keep it, an' welcome,' she said. ''Taint long you'll keep it in this choky place. I 've no need to come beggin' to ye for yer Polly Anthises—there's cartloads better to be got helsevheres. But you're a silly, selfish, hungrateful little gal, that 's what ye are. Ketch me a-hofferin' to do a kindness to you again, little gal. Good mornin', master.'

And Mrs. Bloice turned and went away in a rage.

It was late before the overworked parish doctor called. He felt the weak, fluttering pulse, looking at his watch to see when he must run off, as well as to ascertain the rate of beating, said he would send pills and mixture, and turned at the door to add to Liz, 'Meat he ought to have, to keep his strength up, and

wine, too. Could you boil a bit of mutton, or make a sago pudding, if you'd got the stuff? I'll see what I can do; but there's a deal of sickness about, and the rates are terribly high.'

Being accustomed to want-stimulated precocity, he spoke to Liz as if she had been a grown-up woman.

Granny received a few medical comforts from the parish, and was soon obliged to accept also regular relief. It was a hard time for Granny and Liz. Their clergyman was detained in the country, and the friend who had temporarily taken charge of his district had a parish of his own to look after as well.

The polyanthus was the only tenant of that gloomy little room who thrived and smiled.

'Oh, Polly,' Liz used to say, when she watered her flower, 'I am so glad you don't heat nuffink. If you'd a-bin a bird, I should a-had to sell ye, or let ye fly.'

Polly was Liz's one comfort. She had got so into the habit of talking to her flower that she had come to believe that it understood all she said. The old man, too, as he recovered, liked to have it near him. It was placed on a chair by his bedside during the day—a silently cheering Sister of Mercy—but Liz always carried it off to her own bedside at night.

'Say good-night to Polly, for I'm a-goin' to tuck ye in, Granny,' was the formula gone through every night. The old man having got well enough to hobble

Stranger and the law one

about again and take to his bench again, the parish allowance was withdrawn. But now came his hardest time. He was still very weak; he worked very slowly, and he could get very little work to do. One chilly evening, chilly although spring was passing into summer, he was sitting moping, with his thin blanket wrapped about his shoulders, since he had not been able to redeem his coat. The last money he had earned was gone; he had nothing to pawn to buy more copper; he had had scarcely anything to eat all day. Liz had had a little food given her by her pitying schoolmistress, and was reproaching herself for not having brought home any to Granny, although, poor little soul, it was very little that she had had, and she had not known that her grandfather had exhausted his pence.

'There's the thinx as the lady ordered; shall I pop 'em, Granny?' asked Liz.

After his first outburst of peevishness, the old man had been very patient during his illness, but now that he was getting well again, without doing well, his irritability had returned.

'No,' he answered, crustily. 'If she went back from her word, I ain't a-goin' back from mine. We've kep' 'em all this while, an' now we'll keep 'em till she 'appens to think on 'em,—if she hever do. I'd like to show 'er as poor folks can keep their promises better than rich uns.'

Liz's eye fell on her flower, and then went back to the wrinkled face of the worn, weak old man who had been her best friend. Her heart seemed to come into her mouth, but she gulped it down, screwed up her eyelids to keep her gushing tears from running down her cheeks, and said, as quickly as she could—

'I'm a-goin' to Mrs. Green, Granny.'

'She can't do nuffink,' the old man answered, ''cept she gives ye a bit o' bread. I 'ope she will, Liz, for it's wuss than bein' 'ungry myself, to see you a-starvin', my poor little lass. It 'ud be diff'rent if the parson was back. Not that I'm a-blamin' 'im for bein' kep' away—he can't 'elp that, but it's hout o' sight, hout o' mind with him like the rest on 'em. An' this other parson's a good man, I don't doubt; but then he's got 'is own poor to look arter, and he was a-blowin' me up for wastin' my money on 'baccy, 'cos he see my pipe on the mankle-shelf. It's a good week since I smoked it. If I could on'y git a pull at the pipe, I shouldn't be so down-'earted. It blunts yer 'unger, like, and quiets ye. I say, Liz—'

But when he looked round Liz was gone. She had taken her polyanthus, and was running to the Mission-house.

'The parson hain't come back,' said Mrs. Green, when she opened the door in answer to Liz's tap.

'Oh, please, 'm, will you tell me where the lady

lives as come to see grandfather when he was fust took bad?' asked Liz.

'Mrs. Bloice? why, what ever can you want o''er? Is the old man wuss agin?' replied Mrs. Green. 'Number 6 —— Street, a-leadin' out o' the 'Ackney Road, Mrs. Bloice lives at—the name's hup over the shop-door. But what ever—' Liz did not wait to hear any more, and Mrs. Green finished off with, 'Well, I never; there's manners—it's time the parson was back; that new schoolmistress hain't a bit o' 'old on the children, though she do give 'erself sich airs. I s'pose she fancies 'erself a lady, 'cos she's got that big thing a-bulgin' out at the back o' 'er 'ead, like a Dutch cheese.'

Liz meantime ran on to No. 6 —— Street, Hackney Road.

Mrs. Bloice happened to be alone in the shop when Liz rushed in. She had just had her tea, and had come out from the little den at the back of the shop, still greasy-lipped and in a good temper, to be in readiness for evening customers. The smell of candles, dangling in bunches, was the dominant perfume of the shop, but it had many odours. It was filled with almost all the necessaries, and most of the luxuries of poor consumers. Tall, thin, white letters on the lintel of the shop-door announced that Mr. Bloice was 'Licensed to deal in Tobacco and Snuff.' Poor little Liz snuffed up the medley of scents as a cax

purrs over a sprig of valerian, and glanced round as if she were a Peri that had slipped into Paradise—only to find that she was as much cut off from its substantial enjoyments as if she had still stood disconsolate outside the gate.

- 'Well, little gal, what can I do for you?' asked the plump chandler's wife.
- 'Oh, please, 'm,' cried Liz, putting down her flower on the counter, and feeling very much like Abraham when he lifted the knife to slay his beloved son, 'you said as you'd give me sixpence for my Polly Anthis.'
- 'Oh, ah, I rec'lect,' answered Mrs. Bloice, 'and you wouldn't sell it.'
- 'Oh, please, 'm,' sobbed Liz, 'I'm so fond on it—I never 'ad a flower, not in a pot, afore.'
- 'An' s'pose I don't want to buy it now, little gal, what then?'
- 'Oh, please, 'm, Granny's out o' work, and he hain't nuffink to eat, and no 'baccy.'

Little Liz fairly broke down. Mrs. Bloice, though touchy, was a good-natured woman. A good many touchy people are far more good-natured than the calmly-talking folks whom nothing—so far at least as surface goes—can ever ruffle.

She made inquiries, and then she said, 'Well, look'ee'ere, little gal; I'm glad to'ear your gran'father's a-gittin' about agin, as I'd a'and in bringin' of 'im round. But I can't find 'im work—he must

git that for hisself—that stands to reason—an' my old man wouldn't happrove o' my lendin' on 'im stock money without security. But I'll tell ye what I'll do.'

So saying, Mrs. Bloice laid hands upon a half quartern loaf, cut off a wedge of cheese, and taking down a brown jar almost as plump as herself, bearing in black letters on a dim gilt scroll the legend, 'Bristol Bird's Eye,' weighed out an ounce of tobacco.

'There,' she said, pushing bread, cheese, and 'baccy towards Liz; 'you take them back to yer gran'father, with my compliments. There's nuffink to pay. When he gits on his feet agin he might as well deal 'ere as helsevheres, s' far as I sees; but tell im he can please hisself about that. No, I ain't a-goin' to keep your flower'—and she pushed the polyanthus also towards Liz—' but you might 'ave the manners to say thank 'ee, little gal.'

'Oh, please, 'm,' said Liz, gathering up her spoil, and again she broke down.

It is not always out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh. Sometimes the heart is too full for utterance; like a full bottle, it can only make a spluttering gurgle at the mouth.

'There, there,' said mollified Mrs. Bloice, 'you run away to your gran'father, little gal, an' don't you go blubberin' hover the bread, or it'll be all of a sop afore you git 'ome.'

V.-NATIVE AIR.

THE clergyman came back, and so did Granny's coat, and in other ways his lot was a little lightened; but, after all, it is very little that an East-end clergyman can do, in a material point of view, for the mass of poverty in which he has self-denyingly planted him-Of course, he does do some good in that way, but his main strength consists in his wish to servein his being often the only person with whom his poor come in contact, who, without interested motive -for any motive at all, indeed,-cares for their wel-Granny one sultry afternoon was tinkering fare. away at a set of toys which he was making on spec, in not the highest of spirits, when 'the parson' came in to tell him a great secret. Doleful forebodings had been entertained in the parish as to whether that year it would have its 'country treat.' Subscriptions had come in most slowly, and the poor despondent people were beginning to make up their minds that their dull round of yearly drudgery in stifling darksome holes was to be brightened by no free, fresh, green, sunny day, removed from all the associations of their carking care and almost continuous toil. People who can take holiday any day they please can form no idea of what such days are to the poor-how the anticipation of them lightens labour, the fruition of them seems an ecstatic dream-almost too good to be real, and how

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the looking back on them makes sunshine in many a shady place, when November fogs hang clammy over ditch-like lanes, December snow melts into dismal Christmas slush, or March east winds bite into the marrow of bones that have no succulent flesh and thick flannel and broadcloth to screen them from the cold.

The clergyman had come not only to say that money enough had been raised for travelling expenses, but that a brother clergyman, holding a seaside living not far from a Great Eastern Railway station, had offered to play host to the excursionists. It would be hard to say whether Granny or Liz was the more delighted at the news. Granny was afraid that Liz might have heard it at school; but no, he was able to give it to her with the bloom on, when she ran home at teatime; and the two became children together in their exultation and speculations. Neither had seen the Liz had never travelled by rail. The murky arches straddling on as it seemed interminably through their dreary district, the puffing, screeching engines, the faces that looked down curiously from carriage windows, as into another world, had hitherto had a kind of hopeless fascination for her. She had longed to rush behind those screaming engines into the green, quiet fields to which she had been told those murky arches led; but much in the same way she had. longed to mount to the moon, walking in brightness over the smutty tiles and battered chimney-pots of

Bethnal Green, silvering even its blackening-like mud and its stagnant puddles. And now she, the same Liz that had been droning out her multiplication table in the close schoolroom, was actually going to 'ride in a railway coach,' to gather flowers in 'real fields,' and to behold that wonder of wonders, the mysterious sea which the ships had to cross before they could get into the docks. She clapped her hands and literally danced for joy.

'Oh, Polly,' she cried, running up to her flower, 'won't it be fun? But then you'll be left alone all day, and be thirsty, because there won't be nobody to give yer any water, and you'll mope, without a soul to speak to. No, you shan't; Polly shall go too, shan't she, Granny?

'Oh yes,' answered the old man, 'anything you like, if you'll promise to take care on 'er. It'll do Polly good. She hain't been quite well lately, I fancy; so, as the doctors say, she must go to her native air. I don't rightly know jest where Polly was born, but it must ha' been somewheres in the country, an' we're a-goin' into the country, so that's her native air, which nobody can deny.'

The country air, through mere anticipation, had already got into Granny's head, and he quoted the old song—half singing it—with quite a boon-companion jollity.

Accordingly, when the train, more than half filled

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with excursionists, rolled out of the Great Eastern shed, Polly sat nodding between Liz and Granny. Some of her fellow-travellers teased the little girl about her baby—advising her to send it home again by flinging it out of the window, if she wished to be free to run about and enjoy herself. But Liz did not care. She held up her flower as if it had been a baby, to look out of the window at the dismal, drearily familiar streets and lanes over which they were rumbling. 'Not till night we shan't see 'em agin, Polly, when the gas is a-light,' she exclaimed, triumphantly. 'Oh, Granny,' she added, compassionately, 'ow down in the mouth the folks as hain't got tickets look; I wish they was all a-goin'.'

When the train at last got out into the open country, the East Enders burst forth in song—not very musical perhaps, but fresh from the heart. It could be heard above the rumble, and rattle, and puffing of the train; the weeders in the fields looked up from their work with sluggishly amazed faces, the more lively youngsters amongst them speeding the Cockneys on their way with rustic cheers.

The train pulled up in a station that looked like the famous cottage near a wood. On both sides of the line there was a whispering plantation. Long grasses arched their graceful necks, and peeped in between the fence-rails. Red and black fumitory grew upon the banks. A reach of rusty metals, with

upturned ends, leading nowhither, was almost smothered in white clover. The man and boy who formed the station's staff looked half-frightened at the crowd of pale faces who surged out upon their little platform. Until they saw the clergyman they seemed to think that a mob of Whitechapel roughs had given the police the slip, and were about to rope a ring for a prize-fight. When the train had disappeared round a bend in the line, the crowd of excited pleasure-takers, drowning the whispering of the plantation trees in their joyous hubbub, seemed to have dropped from the skies like a shower of frogs. Headed by their clergyman they at last managed to get through the station gateway, and rolled in jolly disarray between hedgerows breathing out the sweetbriar's pungent and the honeysuckle's luscious fragrance, and white with dog-roses, bindweed, and bryonyblossom. Yellow and lilac vetches waved on the grassy hedge-banks--' They're a-noddin' to Polly as if they knew 'er,' delighted Liz, almost beside herself, exclaimed to Granny-and pheasant's eye glanced brightly from between the blades. Globe flowers tossed in the meadows like big round buttons of polished gold; wild mustard patched the green cornfields with its less burnished yellow, and larks high . overhead sang as if they wished to make themselves interpreters of the East Enders' joy-too ecstatic for adequate human utterance. On a roadside patch of

turf, over which a grey and white donkey was dragging its heavy clog, geese were walking in line, now with their heads held haughtily aloft, and anon with horizontally stiff necks, giving a snake-like hiss,-and a black sow, patched with dry mud, like polygons of rough brown paper, moved off with discontented grunts,—the excursionists passed the rotten, fungusbuttoned stocks, and the dilapidated cage with a gap in its roof, through which an imprisoned Claimant might have made his escape. They stopped to stare up at the windmill, on the cockaded steps of which the dusty miller and his men came out to return the stares with interest. They passed the empty pound, and a farm-house, moated with what looked like treacle-asleep in the midst of its flowers and gooseberry bushes, mouldy-looking old corn-ricks, mahogany-hued, plumpudding-scented, sliced old haystacks, and tarpaulin-covered, light-green, sneezingly-fragrant new ones. And then they trooped through the grey, sunny village, which, as they looked through the open doorways, would have seemed to them a deserted village, had it not been for a few superannuated smockfrocks warming themselves outside by the bee-skeps, or holding their skinny hands over the wood-embers on the hearths, and the clink of hammers and the spray of sparks at the smithy.

The smudged-faced, leathern-aproned smiths ceased from their labours, and rested their hammers on the

anvil, and their bulgy-muscled arms on their hammers as the excursionists tramped past—the colt, with a 'twitch' on his nose, in the traverse, suddenly retracted his hind off-heel from between the legs of the village Vulcan, who, with perspiring patience, was endeavouring to fit the youngster with his first set of singeing shoes. Vulcan did not attempt to take up his reluctant customer's hoof again until he had watched the Londoners roll past the little church, with its jury steeple of white weatherboard, and its white, grev. and orange-lichened gravestones—leaning at all kinds of angles, and the carved cherubs looking like damaged pugilists-and its green grave-boards which earth and grass were uniting their forces to obliterate, like the dead whom the boards' illegible inscriptions had long ceased to commemorate,—until he had seen the last of the 'furriners,' the Cockney 'townies,' file into the umbrageous Rectory grounds. There the Rector met them, and piloted them into the big tithebarn, turned into a banquet-hall, and when dinner was over the tables were cleared away, and swings put up, and the two parsons swung the laity, and the laughing laity swung the cachinnating clergy, and all kinds of games were played, in all kinds of original mannerssince cricket, bowls, croquet, etc., are not familiar pastimes in Bethnal Green—throughout the verdantly pleasant place.

There were several narrow escapes from punt-

wreck—so overloaded was the leaky craft, so reckless were its crews-on the pond golden-fringed with flowering flags. Liz, lugging about Polly, at first could take small part in the sports, except watching them, and, when she was tired of that, rambling at will through pleached alleys, over flower-spangled lawns, and sunny paddocks, was happiness enough for her. Granny, meanwhile, with other elders, sat under a hedge, puffing away at his short pipe, black, but comely in his eyes. The Rector's wife, however, noticed the little girl lugging about her flower-pot, and when she had learnt its history set Liz at liberty by finding a snug place for Polly in the greenhouse. Ever and anon, nevertheless, Liz left her sports, rushing flushed into the greenhouse to look after her pet. 'Maybe, Polly'll feel strange, left all by herself with all them grand flowers,' the little girl said to her grandfather. When a general move was made for the shore. Polly was borne thither by her mistress. It was not much of a shore; low earth-cliffs, with wheat nodding at their edges, or still upright on little landslips half-way down or at their base; and a hulk, high and dry, used as a coast-guard station; but it was full of infinite variety to the East Enders, because the sunlit sea-seemingly unbounded on the other side, since no coast-line could be seen—was heaving green, and breaking white upon the tawny sand. Dreamily they watched the white sails gliding by in the offing, the streaks of steamers' smoke that smudged the horizon; reverentially they listened to the honest, bronzed, prosy coast-guard men—for many a year almost as much landsmen as themselves. They dabbled in the sea, adventurous spirits bathed in it, and came back saying that it was 'oh, so different from the Lea!'

The Cockneys, revelling in the sense that their necks were for once out of the collar, could scarcely tear themselves away from the shore, when a warning went abroad that it was time for them to return to the Rectory for their evening meal. Granny, Liz, and Polly lingered amongst the last upon the beach. Granny was sure that the sea-breeze was doing Polly good, and wanted to refresh her further with sea-water; but to this Liz objected from light of nature.

With hearty cheers for their kind hosts, the Londoners trooped out of the Rectory gates, in the rich twilight of the summer evening. The villagers, clustered at their doorways, watched the strangers curiously as they marched through the village street. Such an advent and exodus would furnish the country folk with food for talk for a fortnight to come. Silvery stars began to blossom in the paling orange and pearl-grey sky as the excursionists marched—some dragging weary legs, others bursting forth in snatches of song—along the dewy-fragrant lane. The man and boy at the station, no longer timorous,

hoped they had enjoyed themselves, and when the train that was to carry them back to town rolled in, rushed about with an unwonted sense of importance, shoving the third-class holiday-makers into all classes of carriages indiscriminately; and rightful first-class passengers, when they found that the intruders on their space were no gin-scented roughs, made room for them with amused alacrity. The more energetic of the travellers still burst forth in fitful song during the ride home, but Liz fell asleep, cuddling her Polly. Blinking her eyes in the gaslight, but still almost somnambulistic, she walked hand in hand with Granny to their lane—how different from the one through which they had walked to the country station; but, after all, the cramped room was home, and Liz was glad to see her bed. She kept her eyes open long enough to undress and water Polly. Just before she fell into the sweet sleep that follows unwonted exercise in rural ozone, the little Londoner heard her grandfather drowsily mumbling:-

'Polly looks the on'y bright 'un o' the lot. I knew she'd be all right agin, if we on'y give 'er her native air.'

VI.-POLLY'S TRIUMPH.

'It never rains but it pours,' said Delille, the silk-weaver, looking into Granny's room. 'There were you jollifying in the country only a few days ago,

and now our Flower Show's coming off. I couldn't go, but I guess I shan't cut a bad figure at the show. My Clarry's going to exhibit her fuchsia, and it's a real beauty; and I've an arum and a tobacco-plant that'll be hard to beat. I know there's none in this parish that can lick 'em. Why don't you show your polyanthus, Liz?'

'We was a-thinkin' o' that,' answered Granny, but Polly seems to be fallin' off. She picked up wonderful when we took her to the sea, but now she seems to be a-gittin' peakish agin, an' my Liz wouldn't like her to be beat—she 've a notion as it would wex her.'

The silk-weaver laughed. 'Why, little un,' he said, 'you can't expect a polyanthus to be in blossom all the year round. Yours has been a real beauty in her time. You take my advice, Liz, and send her.'

Accordingly Polly figured amongst the entries.

'Keep your sperrits up, Polly,' said the old man, when his granddaughter at the last moment was carrying off her pet to the schoolhouse. 'Liz an' me'll come an' 'ave a look at ye, soon 's ever they'll let us.'

'Oh, it's real beautiful, Granny,' said Liz, when she came back. 'There's potry and textes stuck up all about the walls, and there's flags, and buns, and ginger beer, and oh, my! sich flowers—as fine as

them we see in the glass house down in the country. I'm afeared Clarry won't git no prize, for there's fuchsias there as big as bushes; and Polly won't neither, I'm afeared. Not as I see any as was finer, on'y p'r'aps the gen'elman as is to say who's to 'ave the prizes won't ketch sight on her wi' all them great uns round her.'

While the judge and the committee made their rounds, a crowd of exhibitors gathered about the schoolhouse in a state of feverish agitation. Small boys climbed on one another's backs and peeped in at the windows, but the reports of awards they promulgated being proportioned to the liking they had for the inquirer as to the fate of his or her plant, their exclusive information soon became discredited. At last the doors were opened to the general public, and, foremost of the throng, the exhibitors rushed into what in grimy Bethnal Green seemed a stray section of Fairy Land. Silken leaves, velvet leaves of green, and gold-sprinkled green, and claret-red, jungles of glossy fern, long boxes of mignonette, single roses in paper ruffs, bouquets, and potted plants in ranks and banks, with petals of every hue from ivory white to almost black, and Creeping Jennys, musk-plants, cactuses, and spider plants swinging overhead with long, dangling, many-handed arms had metamorphosed the ordinarily dull dusty, schoolrooms into bowers of fresh beauty. The assiduously

watered boards and soil gave forth a cool, pleasant scent as of a garden after a summer shower. Perspiring mothers, hand-tied with two or three babies apiece, were also watered by the benevolent attendants—drinking out of the buckets lifted to their lips like thirsty horses. 'Lawks, now, this is what I call downright lovely, ain't it?' was the general verdict pronounced upon the show.

But Liz had no time to look at other flowers until she had found her Polly. Oh, joy! The judge had 'ketched a sight on 'er,' and in the pot was stuck a card, inscribed, 'First Prize. Eliza Chignell.' But who was Eliza Chignell? Liz was so accustomed to being called Liz only, that at first she did not recognise her own name. When she had realised the fact that she was Eliza Chignell, she scurried home to Granny with the glad tidings. Putting on his coat in honour of the occasion, Granny returned with her to the show, and there the two paid their respects to Polly, at first as if not quite certain that she would notice them, but were soon delighted to discover that her exaltation had not turned her head.

'She ain't a mite proud, is she, Granny?' said Liz.

'Tell'ee what, I should like to stay an' see yer git the prize guv to ye, Liz, but I can't 'ford the time,' answered Granny.

Just then, however, up came the clergyman and a lady visitor.

Section 1

'Oh, here's your creditor,' said the clergyman, with a laugh. 'Chignell, this lady has come to get out of your debt.'

It was the lady who had ordered the copper toyset. She was profuse in apologies as she took out her purse.

'Your little girl won't be turned away now if she brings them to my house,' the lady said, when she had paid the money due. 'Or, stop, after all the trouble you have had, you should keep them, and sell them again to some one else.'

'Thank'ee, yer leddyship,' Granny answered, sturdily, 'but if it's all the same to you, I'd rather you should 'ave 'em. They're good workmanship, though I say it as shouldn't,—worth yer money, and I shan't feel as if I'd been a-cadgin'. I can 'ford to keep holiday now, an' see my little gal get her prize guv to her with all this 'ere silver in my pocket. 'Tain't often I be so rich, for I'd guv it up as a bad debt, yer leddyship,' he added, with a roguish twinkle in his faded grey eyes.

When Liz came back from the prize-giver's table with her shilling in her hand, she scarcely knew whether she walked upon her head or on her heels. Her little schoolmates, who were not prize-takers, crowded round her, proud of being on speaking terms with a young lady who had just come into such a fortune.

'But it's Polly as did ought to 'ave it, not me, Granny,' said Liz. 'It wasn't the money as I wanted, but for Polly to win.'

Poor Clarry Delille, whose beautiful fuchsia had been distanced by still more beautiful ones, came up crying bitterly. 'It's a shame,' she sobbed; 'cheatin' it is, for that old Polly Anthis o' yourn to git a prize, an' my fuchsia not. I wanted so to git some money. I made sure 'twould be half-a-crown, an' now I've got nuffink, an' you've got a bob for that old thing.'

'You can 'ave the shillin', an' welcome,' said Liz.
'Your father give me the pot; an' if it 'adn't been for he, most like Polly would ha' died, and 'twas he put me up to showin' on her.'

Clarry was not covetous enough to take the whole shilling, but she did not scruple to accept half of it.

With the remaining sixpence, when she had borne Polly home in triumph, in the evening, Liz bought two penn'orth of blue ribbon to make a rosette for her, and a pint of shrimps for a banquet in her honour. Granny was very fond of shrimps, but could not often afford to buy them.

'Oh, you mustn't thank me, Granny, but Polly,' said Liz, when they had finished their sumptuous repast, and were preparing for bed. Polly, with her rosette still on, was carried to her mistress's bedside.

. Language (14)

'Well, I don't think I ever spent a ha'penny better than when I bought Polly,' said the old man as he put out the candle. 'Only a bit of a flower, an' yet the pleasure she's a-bin to us! Good-night, Liz. Good-night, Polly.'





UP IN A BALLOON.



HERE was great excitement in Buttercupbury. For the first time in the course of its long existence that pleasant little country town beheld a balloon. A few Buttercupburyans had been up to London, but it did not follow from that that they had seen a balloon—although

they said they had, and gave themselves blasé airs in consequence. At any rate, the vast majority of the Buttercupburyans (if one may talk about a vast majority under such circumstances) had never seen any balloon, but a fire-balloon, except in a picture; and now that they had got the chance of doing so, they availed themselves of it with unsophisticated enjoyment.

They assembled, if not 'in their thousands,' at least in their scores, at the little railway station (even Buttercupbury had a railway station) to welcome

the arrival of the great Mr. Brown from London. The distinguished aeronaut was to be handsomely paid for his trouble, but that made no difference in the opinion of his welcomers. They thought that he had done them great honour in consenting to make an ascent from Buttercupbury. Sooth to say, the inhabitants of Buttercupbury were rather hard up in the way of public amusements. They had a little theatre, but for fifty-one weeks in the year a clothier and hatter made a warehouse of it, only very partially removing his wares when an itinerant lecturer on astronomy hired it for the exhibition of his orrery. Circuses and Wild Beast Shows visited Buttercupbury in very eccentric comet-like orbits-Penny Readings had not been invented in those daysand Buttercupbury, when its work was done, often felt bored. Its latest public amusement, before Mr. Brown arrived, was when, some months before, Signor Fantasticoto, with an eye to subsequent sixpences and coppers (which were liberally poured nto his by no means Italian-looking hat), had gone down East Hill backwards, posturingly and perspiringly performing treadmill exercise upon a rolling barrel.

So the Buttereupburyans assembled at the railway station and reverentially escorted Mr. Brown and his packed-up balloon to the 'Baldfaced Stag.' Reverentially too they watched its unpacking, when it

had been carried to a meadow adjoining the Gas Works to be inflated.

Such funny little Gas Works! A Londoner had greatly offended his Buttercupbury host by saying, when he saw the big drum-like gas-holder, 'Dear me! then there is some enterprise down here. But if you've got a man with spirit enough to make his own gas, why doesn't he stir you up to light your town?'

Buttercupbury the night before had been left in darkness, because, although there wasn't any, there ought to have been moonlight according to the almanac; and so the impertinent Cockney actually supposed that the town Gas Works were only private ones.

The flabby bag of oiled silk began to swell like an angry snake, and by-and-by had bellied, so to speak, into a huge pegtop staggering on its peg. The balloon, kept down by the ropes fastened to the car, was swaying from side to side. The sandbags for ballast, the grappling iron and cable, the barometer, the map, the basket of prog, and so on, were put into the car, and then Mr. Brown entered it with his party. This consisted of two of the 'leading inhabitants' of Buttercupbury, and a little boy whom we will call Ted. Of course, it was only by special fayour that Ted was included.

'Let go,' shouted Mr. Brown to the men in charge

of the ropes; the infantry band engaged in honour of the occasion struck up the not very appropriate air of 'See the conquering hero comes,' and the 'Weilburg,' after a momentary stagger, as if she meant to burst herself against the Gas Works, rose above a white pavement of upturned faces, which had a very comical effect as they shouted out 'Hurrah.' At first it made Ted sick when he looked over the side of the car. He felt as if he must fling himself overboard. But this feeling soon went off, and was followed by a triumphant feeling as the 'Weilburg' rose higher and higher in the fresh air. As soon as she had fairly got way upon her, she slanted across the town. She was low enough when she went over the tower of All Saints' Church for the voyagers to make out the sham footmarks that had been cut and punched out in the leads. A great many of the Buttercupburyans had assembled in the meadow to witness the ascent; but, of course, some were left in the town. As they craned out of windows, and gave themselves cricks in the neck in the street, in order to see the passing wonder, it was difficult to resist the temptation to drop something on to the tops of their heads or into their gaping mouths. When the balloon went over the almost deserted Market Square, the one-horse railway 'bus standing in front of the 'Baldfaced Stag' looked like a toy-cart.

In the long-galleried yard behind the inn an ostler

could be seen grooming a horse, haltered outside a stable door. The horse turned round to bite, the ostler struck him with his currycomb, and the horse began to plunge upon the stones—all this could be seen, but it all passed in dumb show.

High over the battered weathercock at the top of St. Martin's steeple skimmed the 'Weilburg;' but the merry music the bells were clashing out in honour of the gala day could be heard in the car. Again and again across the river, winding like a blue snake between its pollard willows—over the old watermill, with a mite of a flour sack, the size of a little pincushion, dangling from its crane, and its little fleet of pleasure-boats jostling together like chips—across the dusty London Road, which looks like a straight chalk mark ruled on green velvet, just over the tollbar, and so out into, or rather above, the open country.

'High enough for the present, gentlemen,' says Mr. Brown, as he looks at his barometer. He pulls a rope that dangles like a bell-pull in the neck of the balloon, a valve at the top of the bag opens, and a quantity of gas rushes out with a roar.

'Well, young gentleman, do you feel better now? Have you got over you scare?' asks Mr. Brown.

Ted answers that he likes ballooning a good deal better than he did, but still thinks that an aeronaut's must be a very dangerous profession.

(It is queer what a ghost-like sound voices have up there.)

'Not nearly so much as a sea-sailor's,' answers Mr. Brown. 'In proportion there are far more lives lost by shipwreck than there are by balloon-wreck. Not a score of lives have been lost by balloons. Why, there's an American explodes his balloon on purpose, and yet comes down on his feet like a cat.'

Meantime the balloon went merrily on before a brisk current from the south-west, now and then spinning round in a somewhat dizzying fashion. Beneath, the country looked more like a flat carpet—green, grey, black, brown, yellow, blue, red, of various hues and of fantastically diverse patterns—than a series of different levels.

Presently says Mr. Brown,-

'There's a storm working up, gentlemen. Suppose we have a glass of sherry and a sandwich, and then put on our wraps, and dodge it by going up above it.'

Accordingly the prog basket is opened, and cold fowl, ham, black bottles, and so on, are brought out. When the 'Weilburg's' crew have drunk to her 'prosperous voyage,' they put on their greatcoats. Mr. Brown empties some of the sand-bags overboard, and up shoots the balloon. It is not long before lightning is zigzagging and thunder rolling beneath the balloon, whilst that goes up, up, through dense

vapour, until it comes out beneath a golden sun and a spotless blue sky, with a floor of washed wool and rainbows underneath.

Again Mr. Brown pulls the valve-rope, and the balloon ceases to rise, and bears away in a different direction from that which it was previously taking. Mr. Brown, after a time, looks at his watch. 'We must begin to descend, gentlemen,' he says. 'I should like, if I can, to get back to London to-night, and, besides, we're standing right out to sea on this tack.'

It has been very cold up there, and Mr. Brown's amateur companions have no desire to be carried out to sea. They are very glad when Mr. Brown pulls the valve-rope, the valve opens with a boom, and the balloon drops towards the blushing golden clouds. On them, as he looks over the side. Ted sees what looks like another balloon rushing up to meet them. The travellers had begun to feel a little warmer as the balloon approached the clouds, but when it plunges into them they once more shiver. When they come out on the other side, the storm is over, but it is a dull evening, and the 'Weilburg' is dropping very rapidly over the estuary of a tidal river. The men in the guardship and the anchored fishing smacks see her as she drops like a lark; their shouts can just be heard in the car. Overboard goes more ballast, and the 'Weilburg'

rises and crosses the estuary. On the other side, however, there is not much land intervening between the river and the sea, and the valve-rope is pulled with a vengeance now. To avoid coming down with a thump, Mr. Brown has to throw out ballast again. As it is, the balloon nearly runs foul of some trees, with their branches all stretching inland, in a paddock on the very verge of the sea. Mr. Brown, however, has thrown out the grapnel also, and it has caught. Blue-jackets are racing to the rescue from the low white coast-guard station, and heavy-footed, grinning farmer's men are also crawling to offer their assistance. Between them they lay hold of the grapnel-rope, and tow the 'Weilburg' into the centre of the paddock, where, whilst seagulls circle screaming round her, and in the inland distance cawing rooks are flocking back to roost, the 'Weilburg' gradually comes down.

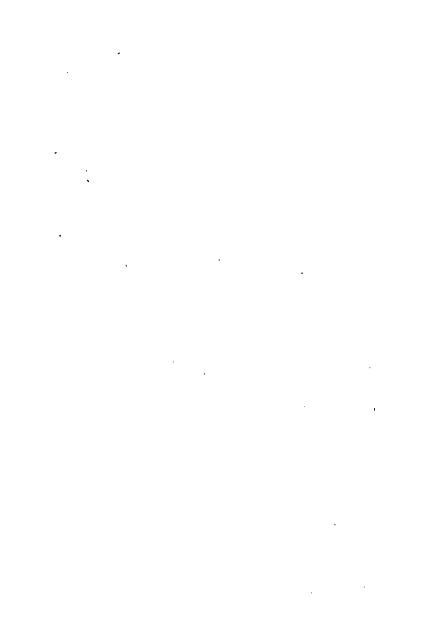
In spite of all Mr. Brown's care, his car-companions got a bumping, and he was not able to get back to London that night. They had landed not only a good many miles from Buttercupbury, but also too far from any railway station to be able to catch a train to anywhere.

When the balloon had been emptied and packed, a little crowd of farming and fishing folk followed the cart on which it was placed to the nearest inn; and the 'Weilburg' crew had to take their hearty supper of ham and eggs under the watch of some score pairs

of eyes, staring through the window, and peeping in at the door of the room in which they sax.

I need not tell you that when little Ted go back to Buttercupbury late next day, he looked upon humself, and was looked upon by the townsfolk, as quite a hero.







'I knew that there was no chance of my getting out of the close, dusty school-room '—CHILD'S CORNER BOOK, p. 73.



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A. FOX.

N a stable I used often to see, were nailed a fox's head and brush. No doubt they vanished long ago—even in the time I refer to, the head looked like a mouldy mask, and the brush like a boa that has been thrown on to a dunghill because it had 'got the moth.' But they were

things I liked to look at, because they reminded me, when literally 'kept in' at school, of the free, fresh country. One sunny playtime I had an 'imposition'—what downright impositions we thought those 'impos!'—of I forget how many lines of Virgil, to get through. I knew that there was no chance of my getting out of the close, dusty school-room that playtime, and so I set very drowsily about my task. In a minute or two I was resting my head on my hands and my elbows on my locker. A bluebottle was buzzing and butting against one of the

windows; we had had suet-pudding for dinner—a suet-pudding of a peculiarly lukewarm putty-like consistency. Instead of going on with my Virgil, I dreamily gazed at the mangy fox's head, and as I gazed, with owl-like film stealing over my eyes, it opened its pointed muzzle, and spake:—

'My name is A. Fox. I know I have not long to live, and will now make my last dying speech and confession. My second death, when even what remains of me shall vanish from the earth, is fast approaching. I will tell my tale about my brush as truthfully as you can expect from one of my race.

'I was born of rich and dishonest parents. called my mother a vixen, but oh! I loved her dearly -she brought me such nice things! Neither of my parents, I am proud to say, disgraced my long line of rich and dishonest ancestry. Amongst my ancestors I radiantly reckon the fox that persuaded the crow to give him a song, and also a bit of cheese. I am descended in the direct line from the fox that invited the stork to dinner; the fox the stork invited to dinner, I may mention in passing, was not the same, whatever fabulists, who plainly write themselves down tellers of tarrydiddles, may say. He was an idiot brother—the un-natural of the family. The fox that persuaded the goat to leap into a well, in order that he might climb out over the goat's shoulders, was also an ancestor of mine in the direct line.

The fox that had lost his tail was closely connected with our branch of the family. I am not going to be ashamed of an unfortunate kinsman, so long as he behaves himself like a fox; but the fox that wouldn't cut off his tail to follow the new fashion was another ancestor of mine in the direct line. disown the fox that pitied the mask because it had no brains. I cannot trace any family likeness in him. For one thing, genuine foxes are not given to pity they're not so soft; and for another, they know well enough that lots of good-looking faces are only masks for empty heads, and think it good for trade that it is so. The fox that carried off the fawn, the lion, and the tiger had been fighting for was my forebear-perhaps, I should say, fore-fox-beyond a doubt, and so was the fox that wouldn't go into the lion's den, because he could not see any footprints coming from it-vestigia nulla retrorsum. As you're shamming to do Virgil, I may quote Latin. By the bye, though, it would be more worthy of a fox to quote it if you didn't know anything at all about it. I don't believe in the fox that only found out the ass in the lion's skin when he began to bray. A fox was not wanted for that-any goose could have done it.

6 My great-grandfather was the fox that had a good many more lives than a cat—ninety times nine. Cat. indeed! Those tellers of tarrydiddles make out that a fox once boasted to a cat that he had ever so many shifts to save him from the hounds, whilst she could only run up a tree; and that, presently, the hounds came, and the cat ran up a tree and was saved, whilst the fox, in spite of all his shifts, was killed. Stuff and nonsense! Fiddlededee! It's all a fable! A cat get off, when a fox came to grief! The cat would have found herself "up a tree," as you boys say! But this is a digression; I was talking about my great-grandfather.

'Time after time, year after year, he ran away, and lived to run again another day. He used to take a header over a precipice, and the hounds that went after him got smashed—serve them jolly well right! —but my sagacious proavus—you lazy young scamp, ook it out in your dictionary—but you've looked at me long enough to want to be, in your poor human way, a fox, and so I suppose you think you needn't take the trouble-well, then, my proavus had his "earth" just a foot or two beneath the brink of the precipice, and by catching hold of a branch with his sharp teeth—I wonder we haven't pointed tails, since we're so sharp in a general way of speaking—he could swing himself into his home, whilst the thickheaded hounds, that think themselves so wise, toppled over into Tophet. After all, the stupid dogs didn't catch my great-grandfather. The mean human hound of a huntsman, after the trick had been played scores of times, was actually! 'cute enough to guess at it.

What dolts you human critturs are! So, on spec, he cut off the branch, and the next time poor greatgrandfather tried his dodge on, he was smashed to smithereens. Even foxes are not wise at all hours.

'I was born in a wood, just inside, in a hole in the hedgebank. Father and mother used to bring us voungsters home things at first, but we soon went out with them at night to cater for ourselves. Oh. what jolly fun it was, in the dew and the moonlight! We'd come on a lot of plump rabbits nibbling the young corn; off they'd scurry, this way and that, but we soon got our supper. The big jack hares were harder to catch. We used to come on them singly, floundering about in the furrows, with their great ears cocked up, or else one stretched one way and the other another. Many a good hunt I've had after a hare. Off he'd go at a splitting pace. "All right, old boy," I used to say to myself, "go ahead; I a'n't going to lose my wind." And so I'd jog on, just keeping him in sight, and pounce down on him when he was blown. Birds, too! partridges-what feeds I've had off them! Whole broods of the juicy young ones I've come across, sound asleep, snuggling round their respected papa and mamma. Much good their papa was to them. Snap, snap, I used to go, and kill as many as I could before they woke If they once woke, up they'd go with a whirr, spoiling our chances by scaring the other broads. You

needn't look so horrified. It was as natural for me to like partridge as it is for you to like pie-I don't mean "resurrection pie." Besides, don't men go poaching as well as foxes? The only difference is that the foxes do it more cleverly. I used to meet the heavy-footed louts out poaching, slouching along in their smock-frocks, and I used to despise them because they made such a ridiculous row, fancying all the time that they were very sly and quiet. And if foxes do kill game, don't we kill moles, and mice, and rats as well? And so we are public benefactors. Young lamb, too, I used to like, but it was not often I could get it. One had to get it very young, you see, and to take precious good care that Mrs. Sheep was asleep. An angry ewe, especially those horned ones, was more than I liked to tackle. Grabbing geese and ducks, again, was prime fun; but I think the primest was getting into a hen-house. You may padlock up your poultry, but if stupid human thieves can steal them, of course foxes can. Oh, it is such fun! There's such a flutter, and a fluster, and a cackling when the fowls wake up and find out who's come to see them. The only pity is that you can't cut off with them all. I used to like quality in my food, and a plump pullet is tenderer than an old cock; but still, when I was sharp-set, I went in for quantity; and, besides, it was such a lark to carry off. right before his agitated wives, an old chanticleer.

that a few hours before had been strutting about as if he were monarch of all he surveyed.

'I've told you about flesh and fowl; I don't remember having ever tasted fish, but I was as fond of fruit as you are. Oh, the goosegogs I've eaten! walking up and down the garden-paths as quietly as the dew was falling. They hung so low, I had only just to open my mouth. Peaches and apricots and nectarines and greengages were harder to get at, but I got them for all that; and once I squeezed into a vinery, and just didn't I walk into the green and purple grapes?

'Cub-hunting scared me a little, but I soon got to enjoy being chased. It was such fun to know that the dogs were at fault, and to hear "Stole away" shouted ever so far behind. And then all those big men and horses pounding away like mad after little me! I didn't think very much of them, but still, I liked the red-coats thinking so much of me. I soon found out that I was one of the most important members of English society. Except during the hunting season, woe betide the man who menaced my life or my comfort! I recruited my energies during my long vacation, but really I soon began to long for the excitement of Yoicks / Tallyho / Hark forward ! and all the rest of it, once more. Little as I was. I could set my wits and wind against all those big creatures, and baffle them. Foxes are grateful to fox-hunters for the fun they give them, but they have not a very respectful opinion of their hunters' intellect. Those dogs, too, that such a fuss is made about—Ringwood, Sweetlips, Jowler, and the whole barking of the pack! They may give tongue, but I could give them cheek. Why, I've swum across a river and then doubled back into it, and the hounds have swum across within sight of me, poor innocents!

'I was trapped once; but that was only that I might be sent to a county in which foxes were scarce. En route I was left in a hamper at a London wharf. Of course, as I had the chance, I got out; and oh, what fun it was! All the clerks except one were Cockneys; and they rushed up to their country brother for protection. They thought I should eat them; thank you, I've better taste. I tried hard, though, to bite the young man from the country when he caught hold of me by the brush and the scruff of the neck, and shoved me back into my hamper.

'How many times have I been hunted? My dear boy, I cannot count. I have tricked human, and, what is far more—though it isn't much, after all—canine sagacity, oftener than I can specify. The funniest hunt I can remember was when I ran up a waterpipe, and got on to the leads of a Quaker's house. The front door was open, and the hounds swarmed all over and about the house except just

where I was, after me. The good man remonstrated when he saw his chairs knocked down; but the Master of the Hounds answered—how I laughed to myself—"Rubbish, my good sir; we must get the fox." He didn't get me, however. Afterwards, I have heard, the Master of the Hounds sent the worthy old Quaker a note of apology and a fat turkey, to which this was the reply:—

"Friend, I thank thee for thy fat turkey; but I would not have thee and thy quadrupeds within my walls again—nay, not for fifty fat turkeys."

'At last, however, I ran my last run; and when I found that, try as I might, the dogs were constantly gaining on me, I ceased to think fox-hunting fun. I remember a grip and a worry, the yelping of dogs, the lashing of whips; and then I remember nothing, until I came to myself—all that was left of myself, the beginning and the end—fastened to this old stable. And now I must vanish utterly, turn into dust, see this green world no more, even with dead eyes. Ah me! al, al."

In more vernacular language, I sang out, 'Oh, oh,' as a lithe cane stingingly writhed itself round my shoulders, because I had gone to sleep over my task.



A NIGHT WITH GLASS-BLOWERS.

HE last stroke of midnight still hummed through the else silent house. I was sitting nodding in my chair, when I heard a tinkling rattle. 'The cat's in the cupboard,' I cried, and ran to it to turn her out. But when I opened the door, I found not the cat, but a black wine-bottle,

with its cork stuck jauntily on one side, talking energetically in Vitrese to a cut-glass decanter.

'You needn't turn up your stopper at me,' it said to the decanter. 'I'm as good as you, and better. You have to come to me for your wine, and besides, relations shouldn't quarrel; we belong to the same old family.'

'The same family! What are you talking about, you low fellow? You're only a common bottle,' exclaimed the decanter, quivering with indignation. Her daughters, the wine-glasses, crowded around

her swelling skirts, also quivering with indignation; and a middle-class green glass medicine-bottle sidled up to the aristocratic decanter, and stuck out its label to make the democratic black bottle keep its distance.

- 'Come, now, that is rather too ridiculous, Loblolly,' laughed the black bottle. 'A'n't we almost the identical same flesh and blood, as men would say? I'm made of soap-waste and sand, and brick-dust and lime, and my smashed ancestors; and you're made of just the same, except that the smashed glass in you is crown-glass cullet—it don't belong to your ancestors?'
- 'Silence, boor,' said the decanter, lifting high her scraggy dowager neck. 'Defile not a noble word with thy plebeian lips; what knowest *thou* of ancestors?'
- 'Well, that's a good 'un, old lady,' answered the black bottle, twinkling merrily in the gas-light. 'If you don't know the history of our family, I do.'
- 'Our family!' the decanter echoed, contemptuously.
- 'Yes, our family, my fine lady,' answered the black bottle.
- 'Well, let it for argument's sake—an absurdly generous admission—be "our family," what canst thou know of its archives, poor thick untransparent?'
 - 'Ha—ha! it's my belief, old lady, you don't know

the family history; you want me to teach it to you. Now I come to look at you, I'm inclined to think that I belong to an older branch of the family than you do. Well, I pity your ignorance. As a member of the same family, I'm ashamed of you, but still, as, etc., again, I'll do my best to enlighten you. attention, old lady, and keep those girls of yours from chattering. Loblolly, if you don't put that label of yours down, I'll shy my cork at you. Now, then, for business.—Dearly beloved, thin and empty cousins, my small, weak, green kinsman in the corner, your education may possibly have not been so utterly neglected as to leave you in ignorance of the fact that there is such a country as Egypt. That is where our family is said to have originated thousands of years ago. I won't swear to the statement, mind you. Very old families are uncommonly like very new families, in one respect at any rate: it's a precious puzzler to find out who started them. But let me recall to your recollection (to speak courteously), let me for the first time make you aware (to speak sincerely), that the earliest Egyptian glass was at least as opaque as myself. You see I was right, old lady, when I hinted that I might be nearer the old stock than you. For the comfort of Loblolly. I will state that the Egyptian glass was coloured: some green, like himself; some black, like myself; and so on. Transparent glass bottles—allow me to

inform vou, dear madam—are mere mushrooms in comparison with opaque vessels of the same material. A Greek historian states—it is needless to mention his name, since none of you would recognise it—that the Ethiopians were in the habit of enclosing corpses in big glass bottles. The fashion has changed, hasn't it, Loblolly, my boy? Now-a-days men are turned into corpses through having been coaxed or compelled to swallow the contents of little glass bottles. You may sneer at me, my dear old lady, because I a'n't transparent; anybody can see through you, poor old dear! but in the cradle of our race—if it was the cradle—opaque glass gave our family its fame. The Greeks and the Romans sent to Egypt for glassopaque glass, you understand (probably, though, you can't); slabs for wall panels, and blue vases with white cameo figures on them (if you know what a cameo is, which most probably you don't, poor old dear)!

'There's another story about our origin; most charity-children have read it, but that's no reason why you should know anything about it, cousin; your education seems to have been so shamefully neglected. Well, they say that some Phœnician sailors were driven in by nasty weather to the foot of Mount Carmel. Their cargo was soda, and they took some lumps of it out of their ship to rest their pots on when they did their cooking on the sands. The fire, they

say, made the sand and the soda melt into glass. it did, I fancy that the glass wasn't a transparent cut decanter, eh, cousin? Now don't get crusty, old lady. You've nothing to do with crust. That's left for me, if the wine is properly decanted. I'm darker, and yet I'm fairer than you, old lady. I don't deny that transparent cut glass is very pretty, and very proper for the purposes it's made for; but that's no reason why you should make little of me, that fill you with what you're chiefly liked for, because I'm proper for my purposes. I do my duty in the state of life for which it hath pleased the glass-maker to make me, every bit as well as you do yours, old lady. Let's be sociable. Though you do think yourself so fine, to gain your ends you're obliged to let me put my lips to yours. To put you in a good temper, I'll tell you that it's thought the Phœnicians made transparent white glass before the Egyptians. Mr. Layard found a transparent white glass vase at Nimrud, stamped with the name of a king that reigned 2594 years ago. Though our family was founded somewhere or other in the East, the Easterns are no great shakes at glassmaking now-a-days. They get European glass and melt it over again. The Romans didn't use glass for windows-talc they used-until about 1600 years ago. Do you know what talc is, old lady? Talc is a mineral that is split up and used for window-panes in India and China, now-a-days, just as mica is used

in Russia. They're not so transparent as you are, but then, like me, they're not so brittle. But the Romans were famous hands at glass-making for all that. Were you ever in the British Museum, old lady? I've been emptied there more than once. I a'n't one of your pie-crust sort; but that's neither here nor there. In the British Museum I made the acquaintance of a distinguished Italian connection of ours—the Portland Vase. It's blue, with white figures on it. Thetis under a tree, and Peleus looking at her. It was made to hold the ashes of somebody or other. That seems a queer use to put good glass to, don't it, old lady? We're a versatile family—all kinds of things we go in for; urns, bottles, decanters, wine-glasses, vases, cups and saucers, looking-glasses, bowls with pictures showing through their skin, window-panes, beads, dice, draughtsmen, wall panels, sham precious stones, balls, hairpins, rings, magnifying glasses, burning glasses, telescopes, microscopes, water-clocks, prisms, flower-holders, knucklebones, ships, coffins, door-handles, photographs, multiplying glasses, pillars, piano-strings—but there, I'm out of breath. Venice used to be the place for glass-making. The makers there made as much fuss about their secret as if they were Freemasons. I'm told that since Victor Emmanuel got Venice, glass-making there is looking up again. I'm inclined to think, however, that if you slump use and beauty, and strike a fair average, we British glassites are as good as any. Somewhere about the sixteenth century, glass was first made in England, though it had been used here a long while before that. Crutched Friars, the Savoy, and Lambeth, were the London places in which glass was first made; and Wemyss, Prestonpans, and Leith, the Scotch places. There, old lady, I'll be bound to say you never knew so much about our family before.'

'The black bottle is a boor,' the decanter said, loftily, to the wine-glasses; 'but still I will not deny that he possesses a certain amount of information. That is the way with those common people. Possessing no intrinsic dignity, they are obliged to rely upon their useful knowledge—useful but vulgar—for respect.'

'Yes, that's always the way with those common people,' echoed the medicine bottle.

'You contemptible little Loblolly,' shouted the black bottle, and began to chase the medicine bottle. Just as the medicine-bottle got to the edge of the shelf, it ducked and doubled—over went the black bottle, and was smashed into a hundred fragments on the stone floor of the closet.

In an instant—strange things, you know, happen after twelve o'clock at night—these black bits of glass changed into a wide black landscape. Tongues of flame, flickering in smoke, were licking the dirty lips of roaring iron furnaces. Dirty rubbish rose in hills

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on all sides with dirty ponds stagnating between. The pastures were littered with cinders, and the stiles looked as if they were cut out of coal. The miry highroad stretched drearily along, with smutty, squat red houses on each side; the narrow lanes had almost lost their hedges, and were as black as ink and as sticky as treacle. High over-head colliery-wheels spun round. The stalks of all kinds of engine-houses belched out black clouds. Filthy tramways and scarcely less filthy railways, with stations as dirty as dust-bins, made the country look like a sweep's scratched face. Cottages were sinking into the ground like foundering ships into the sea; and conical kilns and beehive-shaped kilns-dingy-red, yellow, and white-filled the air with stifling fumes.

Just where this dreary country runs into and stains the selvage of a beautiful green country, with gently swelling wooded hills, I saw a man digging up clay.

'What's that, and what is it for?' I asked.

He was a very gruff man, and at first gave me no answer.

At last, when I had asked him several times, he answered, snappishly, 'What's what?'

'Why, that clay,' I said.

'If you know it's clay, what need had you to ask?' said the man. 'And if you want to know what it's for, wait and see.'

So I did wait for many weeks in the closet—it had

grown a very big place, you must remember, since the black bottle had tumbled down.

The men dried the clay and sifted it like flour, and made dough of it, and kneaded the dough with their naked feet, and then made it up into huge loaves, and locked the loaves up in a dark cellar.

After a bit some other men ground some potsherds up, and mixed the dust with the clay they had taken out of the cellar; and then some other men made great melting-pots out of the clay. Some of the pots were like huge, thick flower-pots without any hole at the bottom; and others had their tops covered with a dome, and an opening in the sides like bottletits' nests. It took a long time to dry and bake these pots. When they were ready, they were let down into fiery furnaces, and the hole through which they were lowered was covered up with fireclay. You remember what the black bottle said it and the medicine-bottle were made of. Well, men put stuff of that kind into the flower-pot-like pots through openings in the furnace, and then stopped the holes up for an hour or two, until the pots were ready for some more stuff; and so they went on until the pots were full. The men had only shoes and trousers on. and they told me they drank melted butter only, to keep their bodies from shrivelling when all their natural perspiration was used up-but I fancy they drank beer as well. When the pots were full, the

holes were filled up again, and the fire was made fiercer than ever, for ever so many hours. Then the holes were opened again, and the fire was let down a little, whilst men skimmed the scum off the melted, almost blindingly white-hot stuff in the pots. When the stuff in the pots was skimmed, men poked long hollow iron rods into it, and wriggled them about. When they had got enough of the stuff on them, they blew down them, and made the sticky stuff swell out a little. Then they took their swollen knobs to an iron table, sprinkled them with water, and rolled them on the table into lanky glass eggs. These eggs were put to the mouth of the furnace again, and blown into once more. Next they were put into metal moulds and blown down into; and hey presto! they turned into bottles-all but the necks. The necks were next finished in a way that you would not exactly understand unless you saw it done, and the bottles were carried off by perspiring little boys on iron prongs, and stacked in ovens, which were heated until the bottles too almost began to sweat, and then gradually cooled to make the bottles strong.

Little boys in glass-works, perhaps, do not like to see glass broken; but as other little boys and girls seem to take a mysterious delight in the sight, I may mention that I saw ever so many baby's bottles broken before they were fully blown. Just before the man who was blowing out the baby's bottles had

finished his work, another man had to put his pipe to the bottle and suck in to form the opening in the side. Time after time he was either too soon or too late, and the mis-shapen or broken bottles had to be sent back as *cullet* to the *frit* in the pots.

Window glass needs more care than bottle-glass. There are different materials, and different ways of managing them. I think that you will be chiefly interested, as I was, in finding out how blown glass can be made flat. The window glass-maker first, when he has shaped his knob, as the bottle-blower did, blows it into a shape something like that of a Florence flask without a neck. Then with the help of a little boy, who puts an iron rod against it, he presses it into what looks like a flattened lamp-globe with no opening at the top. The blower then separates his pipe from the glass, and whirls the globe before a hole in the hot furnace until it takes the shape of a shallow finger-glass with a rim. As he goes on whirling, the glass goes on getting flatter and flatter, until at length it is a flat round shield of glass with a boss in the middle, and is carried off to the annealing oven.

Glass for windows made in that way, one of my closet-friends (who was more civil than the clay-digger) told me, is called crown-glass. But there is a newer kind used now—sheet-glass. It is shaped and blown into big cylinders, which are split up with

a diamond, and flattened in a furnace as you might open and spread out a roll of music. Glass-shades are the cut-off round tops of these cylinders.

When I had gained so much knowledge about glass-making, the kitchen-clock struck one—the closet became the closet again—I heard the gas in the lobby singing loudly, and came out to turn the gas down, before it cracked its globe, or the bellglass hung over it.

But when I came out into the room I had left, according to my recovered notion of the clock, just an hour before, I was mysteriously compelled to look at the mirror over the mantel-piece. I did not jump through it, like Alice, but I was forced to look into it.

And what do you think I saw?

More glass-makers—'lots,' as you say, of them: each lot whispering, 'We won't tell the others how we make it.' Then the lots scampered off right and left, and began to dig up stuff, and hide it under their coat-tails.

- 'What means this mystery, my friends?' I asked of the chief man of one lot.
- 'We are going to make plate-glass,' he answered, solemnly.
 - 'May I see, if you please?' I asked.
- 'You may see, if you like, because you don't know anything about such matters,' he answered, impolitely;

'but we shan't tell even you exactly what we use, because you might write it down, and go and tell.'

Then for a time there was confusion, and then I saw clearly a melting-pot hoisted out of a furnace. wheeled up to a table, and tilted over it, by men who held their breath. The melted glass ran freely out at first, but was kept from running over the sides of the table by two iron bars laid upon it, whilst a steel rolling-pin rolled the cooling metal out like dough. As soon as the plate began to cool, it was lugged off the table by pincers on to machinery, which soon sent it on a wheeled table into the annealing ovenheating and gradually cooling oven, of course you understand. When the plates came out of this oven they were next polished on both sides by putting one on the top of another, and rubbing the upper one against the lower with sand and water between, and then women polished them with emery-powder, and after that wooden-polishers, with leather and woollen gloves on, polished them off.

The kitchen clock struck two as I was looking into the looking-glass at some men who were melting frit for flint-glass and lens-glass in the bottletit pots. I was just being told by a man, who poked his head between the mirror and its frame to tell me so, that the covered pots were used to keep the metal pure; and another man, looking out on the other side of the mirror, was shouting that if I would come along

with him, I could see how glass was coloured for church-windows, and so on, when—I awoke.

I was still nodding in my arm-chair. I had been remembering glass-works I had visited, a book about glass was open before me, the kitchen-clock, I found, - had struck two, and the cat had been in the closet. At any rate, I found the floor littered with the fragments of a black bottle.





LITTLE SPOONEY.

I.—HENLEY'S ROW.

OT far from two adjoining Inns of Chancery, there is a long narrow alley—too narrow for wheeled traffic—on both sides chiefly tenanted by butchers. Some of their meat is not very appetising in appearance whatever it may be in taste. It has a stale, flabby look as if it had

been killed in—Canada, say, and had made a very protracted voyage. 'Block ornaments,' moreover, are a 'leading article' in these shops. Not thither do Windsor-fatted beasts find their way from Islington, to enable their slaughterers to proclaim themselves proudly, 'Purveyors to Her Majesty.' Henley's Row is in the core of a squalid district swarming with people who are too poor or too improvident to buy any but second or third rate meat.

Though butchers give the dominant colour, or

colours—red, white, and blue—to the Row, they have not exclusive possession of it. At one end there is a public-house—a very dingy public-house, in spite of its great, garish, gin-palace lamps, greasy, dusty, weary-looking as a waiter who has been up all night or has slept in his clothes. Half-way down the Row, hiding between two butchers' shops, lurks a little sepia-hued coffee-house, with a cup and saucer that seem never to have been washed since they came from the potter's kiln, in one window, a scraggy mutton-chop, that seems never to be changed, on a willow-pattern plate, in the other, and 'Beds,' in lanky, black capitals, dappled with yellowishwhite where the paint has peeled off, on the ground glass over the door. There is a second-hand furniture shop, whose antiquated, unwholesome-looking contents suggest the idea that they were bought for a song after the Great Plague. There is a crockery shop, and underneath it a stall in which an old horn-spectacled cobbler works with his nose scarce above the level of the yellow pie-dishes, etc., dredged with gritty dust, which there usurp a portion of the already quite sufficiently contracted pavement. And, finally, there is one of those strange 'all sorts' shops -part broker's, part second-hand bookseller's, part old curiosity shop-which may be found stowed away in such localities, and which perplex their discoverer with two puzzles-first, who were the

original owners of the goods exposed for sale? secondly, who on earth will purchase them? Dust, of a peculiar, sootily-cloggy kind, is omnipresent in these establishments, overlying their infected-looking furniture, rusty fire-irons, cracked china, cheap coloured modern prints, chapped old pictures, bent bird-cages, shells, ancient watches and seals, Chinese gongs, old newspapers, volumes coverless and title-pageless, or bound in what looks like putrid hippopotamus hide, and all the rest of their, very un-Cleopatra-like, infinite variety of stock. And the keepers are generally as dirty as their shops, powdered over with brown dust, as if they had just come from a snuff manufactory.

Mr. Mould, who looked very much like a spider in a filthy cobweb as he sat in the middle of this shop of his in Henley's Row, perhaps never put on a new suit, or any single new article, of cloth clothes in his life; still it is to be presumed that he sometimes changed his linen, and that the fresh shirt he donned had been washed. It gave no sign of its cleanliness, however, being of just the same sere and yellow hue as its predecessor. Notwithstanding his dinginess, Mr. Mould was not a disagreeable old man. He had picked up a good deal of out-of-theway information, as queerly assorted as his wares. He read the newspaper daily, almost from title to imprint, as he sat smoking in a patch-work-cushioned

arm-chair tilted on its lean, twisted hind legs, and obligingly communicated the contents of his journal to his opposite neighbour, Bob Crisp, the old cobbler, who had no time for reading anything except Reynolds's when his week's work was done. The nuance of Bob's politics may be guessed from his newspaper. Mr. Mould, on the other hand, was a Conservative, and patronised the Standard. Hot were the arguments between the opposite neighbours; but, in spite of the foul air they breathed, they were both, in their ways, sweet-blooded old fellows, and never quarrelled. They were the only inhabitants who had a kind word for Little Spooney when she came to the Row on business or for a treat. Poor little mite 1 its glare of gas made it her Regent Street. She lived in Bacon's Yard, hard by, a dark, damp hole, approached by a low archway, blocked by two thick, squat stone posts. Why they had been put there, it would be hard to say. All they kept out was the dust-cart, and consequently ashes, cabbagestalks, potato-peelings, herring-heads-all the nauseous refuse of a poor neighbourhood putrified in Bacon's Yard, inviting pestilence all the year round, and often breeding it.

In a low lodging-house in Bacon's Yard lived Little Spooney, or rather slept there when she could raise the money for her miserable bed. In spite of police inspection, which has done much good, there

are still lodging-houses in London, which sicken every sense, and Little Spooney's was one of these. She clung to it, however, because it was the only place in the wide world in the least like a home to her. She knew the people of the house; sometimes, when in a good temper, they gave her a scrap of food as they might have thrown a bone to a starving dog, and they did not always turn her out, to sleep on a doorstep, under an arch, or in the lee of a pile of market baskets, when she had not her bed-coppers ready. The little girl was quite alone in the world—had no one really to care a halfpenny whether she lived or died, went on the streets, or came to the gallows. I write of a time before the School Board had sent forth its agents to compel such waifs and strays to come in to be taught; but even now I fear there are a good many little girls in London in Little Spooney's plight. She had never known a father. Her mother was a tramp who had died in the house in which the little girl lodged. This poor creature, after a fashion, had been fond of her child. Little Spooney had a dreamy recollection of wandering with her through green, sunny country, and eating pleasant crusts under fragrant hedges, Begging was no sin in the tramp's eves; it was her trade. But on her deathbed she had said to her poor little fellow-vagrant, 'Whatever you do, don't ye never prig, Mary.'

That, and her dim memories of mother's love and country peace, were the only education 'making for righteousness' little Mary had received. Her nickname had been given to her because, in spite of daily, almost hourly temptation, she had strictly obeyed her mother's dying injunction. In other respects she was very much like other 'gutter children'—foul in person, and sometimes, alas! in speech; but still haunted by a wish for peace once more with her mother in the pure country. The country was Mary's heaven. She longed for it as other wanderers, wearied by the chances and changes of this mortal life, sigh for the rest which remaineth for the people of God.

She would listen delighted to a street-fiddler's farmyard imitations, and follow him about to hear once more the crowing of the cocks, the clucking of the hens, the quacking of the ducks, gabble of the geese, gobble of the turkeys, 'cocked hat, cocked hat' of the guinea-fowl, the harsh cry of the peacock, bark of the yard-dog, bray of the ass, whinny of the horses, grunting of the pigs, lowing of the cows, and bellow of the bull. She strayed to the Dials to see and hear the hopping song-birds, gliding gold and silver fish, grave owls and saucy jackdaws, caged rabbits, and now and then a great live swan moping in the melancholy of majesty dethroned at the bottom of a packing-case. It was not only to get stock for

street sale that she went to the vegetable markets. The sight and scent of fruits and flowers, aromatic herbs, and broad rhubarb leaves with dew running about on them like quicksilver, did not merely make the hungry little lass long for something nice to eat; they appealed to her imagination—made her long for woods and fields and thatched cottages, with smiling gardens and drowsily humming bees.

So the little girl lived, turning her little hand to any little trade that would earn her a crust and a bed, feeding her longing love for the country in the ways I have pointed out, and finding her way ever and anon into Henley's Row, where Mr. Mould and Bob Crisp were the only persons, as I have said, who ever gave her a kindly look or word. But they both saw too many dirty, ragged, shoeless little girls to take more notice of Little Spooney than of any other in the beginning of their acquaintance.

II.—A RED-LETTER DAY.

ONE April morning Mary crept out of her dark lair, an unwashed, unkempt, touzled little thing, as unflowerlike as it is possible for a child to become, on her way to Covent Garden, to invest her jealously-guarded stock-money in sweet violets. The outside air of Bacon's Yard was as unlike that of Araby the Blest as it is almost possible to conceive, but the

little girl's lungs drank it in with relief after the ineffably 'close' atmosphere of the fetid hole from which she had crawled. Dusty bricklayers' labourers were sulkily going to their work; her quarter of the town was, so to speak, giving its last drowsy turn in bed before turning out for another day of toil brightened by no hope, peevish wrangling, savage broils, and stupid dissipation. But Mary, once out of the jaws of Bacon's Yard, felt her spirits rise. A whiff of cool, sweet-scented country air seemed to have stolen, not like a thief, but an angel in the night, into the cramped, smoke-dried, rubbish-littered street. She passed the gloomy, colonnaded theatre in which. she had been told that all kinds of splendours were to be beheld—delights in which she could scarcely believe, because the building frowned so sternly, and the people she had seen slipping in and out at the stage door often looked so shabby and depressed, so unlike her notions of lords and ladies-and entered the market square; it and its tributaries choked with greengrocers' carts and market-gardeners' waggons and railway vans high piled with baskets, sacks, and casks, bringing in for London's mighty maw another mountainous load of cabbages and sprouts, and broccoli, parsnips and turnips and potatoes, spinach and asparagus, beet-root and celery, lettuces, sorrel, endive, cresses, salsify, cucumbers, shallots, and mushrooms. She bought her violets, and sat down

to split her penny bunches into three on the pavement in front of the church, in company with some of her sisterhood. They chirped like the sparrows round about beneath the spring sunshine, but it was not pleasant chat to hear-fitter (save that there was no wit in it) for the pages of the playwright buried in the church than for childhood's lips. Little Mary took no pleasure in such talk, but then, poor little mite, she did not know there was any harm in it. That morning she did not trouble her head about it one way or the other. She was too much taken up with her violets. She purred over them, so to speak, like a cat over a sprig of valerian. She drank up their fragrance as if she would drain them of it before handing them over to her customers. Tastefully she arranged their congregated heads in their green hoods; lovingly she laid them in her basket; tenderly she sprinkled them with freshening water, and then she tripped off to the coffee-stall to spend her penny on a half mugful and a slice of cake. not always that Mary could take her breakfast so early in the day. Sometimes she did not break her fast the whole day long. When she had paid for her breakfast she had still a penny left for dinner, and had fixed on the shop to which she would work round if she made up her mind to buy plum-duff, and which if she fixed upon batter—a slice, and a penny slice, she fully meant to have. She had been very lucky in her marketing—had got plenty of violets, and beauties. She made sure that she would sell them all before night, and then, when she had paid for her bed and indulged in supper—by no means a regular meal with Mary—she would still be quite a capitalist, able next day to buy more flowers than she had just bought, with a handsome sum (in her eyes) over for food, drink, lodging, and contingencies.

Cheered by these roseate, or rather violety, anticipations and her decoction of chicory, carrot, and horse beans, and strengthened by her oleaginous little slab of currant loaf, Mary turned out of the market chanting quite gaily, 'Vi'lets—sweet vi'lets! Penny a bunch—sweet vi'lets.'

She sold a bunch as soon as she got to the bottom of Southampton Street to an early clerk, who could not afford to ride into the City every day, but also could not resist the temptation of buying so lovely and fragrant a 'button-hole' to smarten up his threadbare coat as he hurried on foot to his long day's work beyond Temple Bar, to elicit goodnatured chaff from his fellow-clerks as he entered the gloomy old office, and to whisper, as it were, fragrance to him—to enable him to play truant in thought—to wander through woods chequered with sun and shade, and to lie down and bask on warm hedgebanks, whilst actually he was making prosaic

entries in corpulent folios rectilinearly ruled with blue and red.

Then she went and patrolled from the corner of West Strand to St. Martin's Church, and sold more bunches to travellers getting out of or into the omnibuses that came in over Westminster Bridge and down Regent Street and St. Martin's Lane. Afterwards she worked both sides of the Strand, and sold a few more bunches, sometimes to people who were hurrying along as if they saw Fortune just ahead, and would miss their chance of her for ever if they did not at once clutch her flying skirts, but who, nevertheless, beguiled by the fragrance of which they caught a breath as they were rushing past like express trains, suffered their straining eyes to turn for a moment from their fugitive quarry to the little girl's flower-basket, and became hasty purchasers, won over partly by the winsomeness of the flowers, and partly by the tattered attire of the little flowerseller. A hurried snuff at the fragrance, a hurried glance of pride at the beautiful bunch in the buttonhole having been taken, off the hurried flower-fancier. indulging his taste as dogs lap the Nile, would scurry again, faster than ever, to make up for lost time; with eyes strained harder than ever, looking anxiously ahead to make sure that Fortune had not dodged down a side-street and given him the slip.

The violets did not go off quite as quickly as Mary

had expected, but by noon she had sold enough to justify her in spending her dinner-penny. After much wavering she had at last decided on plum roly-poly, and accordingly bent her steps towards a cook-shop hard by Henley's Row, which was locally famous for that comestible. Up Newcastle Street, down Wych Street, under an archway, and across the two old Inns, was her nearest cut. As she neared the gateway which connects the Inns, a melancholy-looking man, with a second-hand fat quarto—probably just bought in Holywell Street—under his arm, passed through it.

'Much study had made him very pale And lean, and leaden-eyed;'

but even his dim eyes brightened at the sight of Mary's beautiful flowers, and then twinkled, halfpitying, half-amused, when they noticed the rags and dirt of the canephorus.

> 'Now, violets ye thorns and brambles bear, Narcissus now on junipers appear,'

he muttered as he took up a bunch, for which he gave the little girl a new threepenny piece, and then walked away.

Mary stared after him in perplexity. To get threepence all in a lump—in silver too, as bright as the dew on the rhubarb leaves—was very pleasant; but then was it right to take it? Mightn't the gentleman have forgotten about his change? Little Spooney was as determined as ever not to prig, but would it be prigging to take what was given her? But then, again, lawyers lived in the Inns; the gentleman might be a lawyer, and have given her the silver just for a 'plant.' If she didn't look sharp he might call the 'pollis.'

So, influenced partly by honesty and partly by fear, she ran after her customer, shouting, 'I say, I hain't guv ye yer change, please, sir!'

'Never mind about the change, little one. I meant you to keep it,' said the book-bearer, to her great relief, turning in the doorway of the block of buildings on the first floor of which he had residential chambers, the others being let as professional chambers and offices to the tenants whose names in fresh or faded paint densely decorated, or otherwise, both door-jambs.

'Oh, thank 'ee, sir!' exclaimed Mary in great glee, and scampered off, in fear that he would change his mind, into the next Inn and out of it through a bardivided opening into the squalid district that comes up to the very walls of those quiet realms of law and and learned leisure.

As she was sidling through Henley's Row, the cobbler stopped her and bought one of her bunches, which he put into a chipped egg-cup, and placed where his nose almost dipped into it, like the beak of a pecking-bird, as he swayed forward in manipulating his threads.

'There now,' said the old man, 'I'm as good as a lord. I've got a flower-garden, and a beauty. Don't that old cup look diff'rent now the wi'lets is in it? How they smell! If I was a duke I couldn't have none as would smell sweeter nor look nicer. Why don't you buy a bunch, Mr. Mould? They'll sweeten your shop better than your 'baccy.'

So Mr. Mould bought a bunch, and put it on his counter, where, in the midst of dull dust and damp and mildew, the flowers glowed like amethysts or sunlit wine, seeming to a fanciful view a little band of angels alighted in a sepulchre.

In still higher glee Mary ran on to her cook-shop, bought her penny slice, and munched it with great gusto just outside.

It was very nice, but Mary fancied that her restaurateur had not made his usual good penn'orth. She still felt hungry, and as her circumstances were prosperous, she thought that she might, for once in a way, treat herself to a second slice; but just as she was going in to purchase it, she saw a little Bacon's Yard girl, younger than herself, greedily gazing through the vapour-dimmed window-panes at the dainties within the shop, whose curling and waving incense-fumes stole out and tormented famished folk with tantalising titillation.

The little girl was whimpering.

^{&#}x27;What's the matter, Sue?' asked Mary.

'Oh, golly, I'm so 'ungry, Spooney,' answered little Sue.

Mary was quite accustomed to being called Spooney, did not consider the name an insult, but answered to it more readily than to Mary. She remembered how often she had been hungry, and, moved by sudden pity, gave the little girl the penny she had been about to spend upon herself.

She got no verbal thanks. Little Sue instantly dived into the cookshop, but though little Spooney still felt as if she had made a light dinner, she felt so light-hearted likewise that she was glad that she had gone without the second slice.

It was, perhaps, the first time in her life that she had been able to confer a favour, and she was elated with an unwonted feeling of importance, of superiority to little Sue. But mixed with this, there was a purer feeling. In a dim way she was beginning to understand that it might be more blessed to give than to receive. As she went through Henley's Row, the cobbler nodded to her kindly. He had put down his work to snatch his mid-day meal, and was watering his flowers out of his own mug. 'Me and the wi'lets is 'avin' our dinner together,' he said. 'Share and share alike, that's good politics.'

And he laughed at his own joke.

Mary did not see the point of it, but she laughed too, and went on wondering how it was that people seemed so much better-tempered than they had ever seemed before.

As she passed the garden of the nearest Inn, the black boy kneeling on the grass-plat for the first time attracted her attention, though she had *seen* it scores of times before.

'What's he meant to be a-prayin' for?' she speculated.

She had never even been inside a church. Mary was no more a baptismal name than Spooney; but she had a vague notion that people went down on their knees in church to 'ax for summut as they wanted,' and that that was called praying.

'I know what I'd ax for,' she went on, 'if I knew who I was to ax, and they'd mind—to live where the vi'lets grows. But that can't be what the black chap's a-axin' for, with a nice garding all to hisself; but then there's 'ouses all round.'

She watered her remaining flowers at the pump over the old saint's well, to which hundreds of years ago Westminster scholars and brisk city lads used to resort for a summer evening's airing, and tripped out again into the busy world between the great pillars that used to be the haunt of baked-potato men and piemen and shoeblacks, but now have vanished like those of Gaza. Through the street of old clothes and old books went the fragrant basket, freshening its mustiness, shaming its impurities, and so back-

wards and forwards, now on this side and now on that of the great river-following thoroughfare, until some time after the gas had been lighted, Mary plied her pretty but generally not very profitable trade. She thought herself on the high road to fortune, however, when she trudged back to Bacon's Yard with only one bunch left in her basket. Wild visions of being able to make enough by her flowers to enable her to go and live where flowers grew floated through her brain. Never before had she so loathed her lodging-house, or contrasted its hideousness with the loveliness of flowers, as when that night she carried into it her tiny bouquet of green and purple. When she had watered it, and put it under her bed, she felt strongly inclined to kneel down and 'ax' to live where violets bloom; but she feared the ridicule of her companions, and besides she was by no means sure that it would be any good to pray anywhere except in a church—and, perhaps there it would be necessary to wear fine clothes.

So she crept into her bed with her little soul's sincere desire left unexpressed, but none the less, perhaps, was it a prayer.

III.—THE SCHOLAR AND THE WATERCRESS GIRL.

Whenever Mary could do so with any prospect of a profit, she invested her trifle of stock-money in flowers. The cry of 'All a-growing, all a-blowing,'

was music in her ears. She looked with worship on the choice potted plants at the market, the laced papered bouquets, which gentlemen gave 'goold If she could sell such flowers as those, sovrinx ' for. what a happy little girl, she thought, she would benot merely on account of the golden costliness, but also of the glorious beauty of her wares. She stood staring before street flower-stalls, fascinated by the variegated splendour of the sloping banks. followed itinerant flower-sellers about, to feast her eyes on their beauties, proudly tossing their heads or softly smiling in parrow, pony-cart, or high-borne basket. She had her favourites, but still there was not a single flower she did not love; and all street sold flowers she knew by name, sometimes drolly mispronounced. Primroses and cowslips, daisies and daffodils, roses and lilies, pinks and polyanthuses lupins and London pride, musks and mignonette balsams and dahlias, candytuft and calceolarias, wall flowers and heliotrope. Michaelmas daisies and mari golds, lilac and May, fuchsias and pansies, tulips and stocks, china-asters and carnations, 'geraniums' and genistas, violets, lavender, and lilies of the valley—al these were friends she knew by sight; but her inti mates were the primroses, violets, wall-flowers, roses stocks, lilies of the valley, pinks, mignonette and lavender, that constituted in succession her stock ir trade. When there was no green lavender she sold

dry. Notwithstanding her mother's injunction, there was one thing she could not always keep her hands from picking and stealing, and that was a golden chain of laburnum temptingly drooping over the garden rails in some suburban road to which she had extended her rambles. She liked such roads because of their little garden-plots, and the refreshing look of their water-carts, and because they led to the country. Sunday was no day of rest to her. All the week round she had to sell or try to sell; she had no time to get to the pretty real country that lies outside But she made the most of its make-believe London. country-tried her luck in Regent's Park and Hyde Park, the Green Park, and St. James's; and sometimes when she found herself in the Euston Road, she would strike down through square after square to Gray's Inn, and thence zig-zag by Staples Inn, Lincoln's Inn, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Clement's Inn, to the Temple. Grass, trees, and flowers were a passion with the pale-faced little lodger in Bacon's Yard. Her flowers did not always repay her for her devotion; she did not often have such a red-letter day as I have described. Sometimes she invested in flowers when she could have 'worked' other things to much greater profit; at other times her floral ventures were almost total failures. When she did not sell flowers, she tried nuts, and oranges, and watercress.

One raw November morning—a morning of clammy fog that chilled her to the marrow and bit into her already chilblained hands and shoeless, stockingless feet, when she had crawled out of the foul but hot lodging-house-she started by the lanes, and courts, and allevs that lie between Fleet Street and Holborn, for Farringdon Market. The fog was so thick, the blotches of gas upon it were so dim, that an ordinary Londoner might have lost his way in following a much less tortuous course than Mary's; but on she limped, with her hands cuddled in her arm-pits and her basket at her back, turning unhesitatingly to the right and left, and in spite of her lameness she soon reached the market. Greedily she eyed the coffeeseller's can, and mugs, and piles of bread and butter; enviously she glanced at his comparatively few customers. She must earn her breakfast by a weary tramp. She could not even edge near enough to his fire to get warm, so thickly did other sellers waiting for their watercress cluster round it. She had only a penny to lay out, and it was some time before she could struggle up to the woman with whom she usually dealt, and secure her 'hand.' The good woman was a mother, and when she saw how wretched the poor little ragged mite looked, she gave her back her penny, and bade her go and get some breakfast. Mary could not resist the temptation of a half mug of coffee, but she saved the other halfpenny, and limped off with her rushes to the nearest steps to split up her 'hand' into five halfpenny bunches. Her fingers were so numb that she could hardly tie up the cold cresses, but poor little Mary considered herself in luck. She had had half a breakfast, retained half her stock-money, and yet was in possession of a stock which might bring her in the magnificent amount of twopence halfpenny, all profit.

In spite of her chattering teeth, there was something birdlike in the way in which she raised her cry of 'Watercrease, fresh watercrease!' but a poor little wounded bird she looked as she hopped off with her scanty load. Her five bunches were still in her basket when she reached Henley's Row. The coffeehouse keeper there was sometimes a customer of hers. but the cold had put him in a bad temper that morning. He angrily bade her be gone, and not stand there, letting in the fog, when she put her head in at his door. Poor little Mary drew back discomfited. She had relied on getting rid of two bunches there. The cobbler was in his stall, but he always breakfasted at the place in which he lodged, and was not likely to buy a bunch of watercress—especially on such a morning—as a between-meals refreshment. Mary was afraid to try the crockery-shop, because the woman who kept it wrongfully made out that the little girl had broken one of her plates. Mr. Mould's shutters were still up, and there was no one else in

and the same of the same of

the Row who had ever bought cresses of Mary. So, once more raising her cry—not so light-heartedly as when she left the market—she limped on to try her luck elsewhere.

Cresses did not go off freely that morning. When Mary came back to Henley's Row after her round, she had still two bunches left. She was afraid that Mr. Mould must have breakfasted, but still thought she might as well try whether she could sell them to him. When she went into the shop, she found that he had some one with him. He and the pale gentleman who had given Mary the threepenny bit for his bunch of violets-she instantly recognised him, such munificence having stamped him on her memory—were pottering over the filthy old books. They were so filthy that Mary could not help wondering that a gentleman who wore gold spectacles liked to handle them. They made her think of the heaps of rubbish in which she had seen rag-and-bone gatherers poking. At last, having taken up one of the dirtiest of the old books, which gave out a cloud of dust that made him sneeze when he had opened it and then clapped it to again, the gentleman gave an eager, short-sighted look at the date on the title-page, and then exclaimed delightedly, 'Ah, Tom was right. This is what I want. My friend Mr. Jones's clerk told me last night that he thought he had seen it here. What will you take for it?'

Mary opened the wide eyes of astonishment when Mr. Mould, suspecting that he had been entertaining an angel in the book-way unawares, named what seemed to her a preposterous price for a bit of old rubbish. Still more was she astounded when the gentleman laughed and said, 'I will give you that, and as much again, and then I shall have got it a bargain. So I have a right to, but it wouldn't be fair to keep you from making anything to speak of by the book just because you don't know its value.'

And he hastily splashed down the price upon the counter. How Mary's eyes glistened when she saw the silver pieces falling like summer rain!

'Shall I put it up in paper for you, sir?' asked Mr. Mould.

'No, thank you,' answered the gentleman, striding out of the shop, and cuddling his treasure-trove like a baby.

'I should like to know now what the vally o' that book rightly is,' remarked Mr. Mould. 'Any'ow, though, he might ha' got it for 'alf what he give for it. So far he hacted on the square. And p'r'aps, arter all, it's only a craze o' his, and it's me as has got the best o' the bargain. Well, my little gal?'

'Want any fresh watercrease, sir?' asked Mary.

Mr. Mould had breakfasted, but that shower of silver had put him into so good a temper that he cleared out Mary's basket, as he said, for lunch; and

it being too late to get more cresses, she started for Duke's Place, and invested her threepence in nuts.

She turned over her capital more than once during the day, and by standing and trudging about until ten at night, managed to secure herself a meal, a night's lodging, and money for the morrow's marketing. Meantime the scholar sat in his snug chambers, closed in by curtains, shutters, screens, and sandbags from the cold, gloating over his black-letter tome, exulting to find that not a leaf was missing, tenderly binding up the wounds of those that were tattered. He was doing nothing but what he had a right to do; still what queer contrasts of surroundings and employments there are in this huge city, between people who sleep within a stone-cast of each other!

IV.-A 'A'PENNY A BOX.

LUCIFER! Phosphorus! What poetical names those were once, and how prosaic they have become! The Morning Star—the unyoker of the sun-god's steeds—and now what they suggest is vile-smelling matches, proffered by grubby hands. Of all the little trades by which London outcasts mysteriously manage to maintain a miserable existence, Mary liked match-selling the least, but needs must when destitution drives, and at times she was forced to make her rounds with the rectangular, strong-scented boxes, so unlike her beloved, gracefully-rounded, fragrant howers.

For once her 'spooneyism' had stood her in good stead. She bought her matches at an oil-shop where her sobriquet was known, and the reason of it; and one morning when she left her lodging, without a single farthing, she had plucked up courage to ask the oilman to let her have a couple of dozen boxes on trust. Influenced by her reputation for honesty, he had done so, and before midnight she had got rid of her stock. Fearing that the shop might be shut up, she hurried to her creditor's to discharge her obligation. When she had done so, and bought another dozen for next day's trade, she had still some five-pence-farthing left, and, therefore, felt herself in affluent circumstances.

'You ought to be in bed by this time, you poor little wretch,' said the oilman, preparing to put up his shutters; 'cut away home!'

Mary had no home to go to, but she plunged in very good spirits into the maze of houses that separated her from Bacon's Yard. It was a perfect warren, but the little girl knew its windings well.

As she ran along, she saw a fellow-lodger, a lazy, loafing 'rough,' known as The Bullock, enter a marine-store shop. The light that streamed out at the door-way was not very vivid; but much light was not needed to enable any one who knew him to recognise The Bullock's shock head and hulking form. Mary had her share of inquisitiveness, and

peeped in through the window to find out what he was about. The contents of the shop resembled those of Mr. Mould's in miscellaneity. He was really, in the conventional sense, a dealer in marine stores, but considered it more genteel to call himself a dealer in curios. The Bullock had pulled out of his pocket a tarnished, old-fashioned, silver teapot. which looked like a 'reduced gentleman' in a low lodging-house, in the dingy medley, of all sorts, in the midst of which it was planted on a filthy, thicklylittered counter. The Bullock, according to his wont at that time of night, was pretty far gone in drink, and was talking with incautious loudness. 'What's that to you?' he was saving, huskily: but Mary could make him out. 'Don't matter where I got it. What'll you give me for it?'

'Why, you've prigged it from old Mould,' the shopkeeper answered; 'I've seen it in his place a score o' times.'

'Well, if I did find it there,' retorted The Bullock, grinning, 'what do it matter to you? You ain't a-going on the square at your time o' life, are yer? I owe old Mould one. He's too stuck-up to deal with the likes o' me now.' And the ruffian garnished his discourse with a variety of expletives which may be omitted.

Mr. Mould's brother tradesman, however, also declined to deal with The Bullock; not from con-

scientious motives (the scoundrel knew well enough that he would not be 'blown upon'), but because he did not think that it would be 'safe' to do so.

With another explosion of choice language, therefore, the thief snatched up his booty, and staggered out to seek Fortune elsewhere; Mary having just time to slip for concealment on the other side of the shop's bow-window.

On the ruffian reeled, in the direction of Bacon's Yard, the little girl timidly following. The drink that he had taken was telling on him. Presently down he sat upon the pavement, sprawled out his legs, leaned his head against the wall, and fell asleep.

Mary's heart went pit-a-pat as she watched him. Unless she passed him she would have to go a good way round, and, besides, she could see the teapot, and Mr. Mould was a customer of hers, and one of the few people who had ever shown her any kindness. If she could but snatch up the pot, and run off with it to its owner!

She crept softly towards the snoring Bullock. He did not seem to have a very tight grasp upon his spoil. Holding her breath, she extricated it from his limp fingers, stole a few yards on tiptoe, and then sped away to Henley's Row as fast as her bare feet would carry her.

When Mr. Mould had unbolted his door, and,

shading his candle with his hand, saw only little Spooney on his door-step, he began to growl at her for disturbing his rest. He soon changed his tone, however, when he had heard her story.

This was, that she had found the pot.

Not a word did she say about The Bullock, partly from fear of his vengeance, and partly because, according to the code of honour she had picked up in Bacon's Yard, it was contemptible, under any circumstances, to 'peach.'

- 'But how did you know it belonged to me, little 'un?' asked Mr. Mould.
 - 'I 'eard a cove say as it did,' answered Mary. The old man was puzzled.
- 'Well, well,' he said, 'anyways you've done me a good turn. You come and have a talk with me to-morrer. It's time you was a-bed.'
- 'You're late, Spooney; what's kep' yer?' said the Bacon's Yard 'deputy,' when she had paid him his coppers. 'What's that you've got? 'Ave yer taken to findin' at last, like a sensible gal?'

Mary certainly had found what the deputy would have considered *spolium opimum*, but she said nothing about the pot.

- 'It's on'y my matches,' she answered.
- 'Well, mind you put 'em away safe. Your room's full, but little Sue's got a shake-down. You can turn in along o' her.'

In the long, low, warm, dirty kitchen, there were only two persons—one man nodding, almost to his knees, before the hot fire, and another sound asleep, stretched at full length on his back upon a form. Mary went up the crooked staircase that came down into the room, and passed through two 'close' rooms, in which people of both sexes were huddled together—some on the floor between the beds, and one man smoking in bed-into her own crowded room. Most of the beds carried double, and the floor was covered with shake-downs. Both beds and shakedowns, mounded by their tired-out, still occupants, looked very much like graves in the dim light of a halfpenny dip, which the only woman who was awake was just about to blow out, but which she kept burning until Mary had picked her way over the heavily-breathing sleepers on the floor, to little Sue.

The weary young match-seller slipped her kerchief full of boxes under the flock-bed, nestled up to her younger bed-fellow, and fell asleep—almost as soon as she had pulled the rug over her.

Poor little Mary was very fond of her bed, wretched though it was. The rest was sweet to her fagged-out little limbs, and then—so mercifully is compensation sent like sunshine into all kinds of dismal corners—she almost always dreamt of the country—with squalid yice and misery around her, dreamt of

a country fairer, doubtless, than was ever gilt by our sun or silvered by our moon.

That night she was wandering with her mother beneath blue skies, drinking in the luscious breath of flowers, listening to the song of birds, the ripple of clear running water, and the rustle of green leaves, when suddenly she awoke in flames, and in the midst of a wild uproar. Her bedfellow escaped, but poor little Mary was sadly burnt before the fire was extinguished.

The Bullock's hat was found near her bed, but when so many had rushed into the room, no one thought anything of that.

V.-IN HOSPITAL.

The little girl was taken to the nearest hospital. Its physicians complained loudly of its need to be enlarged; but in space, in light, in air, in cleanliness, in quiet, what a contrast it was to the foul, crowded hole from which she had been brought. But at first poor little Mary only unconsciously derived benefit from these advantages.

She had no eye for the pretty pictures and illuminated texts that hung upon the walls of her ward, for the flower-pots that stood here and there on the window-seats, for the brisk little canary with ash-coloured tail feathers peeping from his gold, that kept on hopping from perch to perch like a little winged bix

of embodied sunshine—no ear for its lark-like song. She had no eye, either, for the kindly faces of the sister nurses, but their kindly voices soothed her a little as they bent over her, lightly laying on her lotion with their deftly wielded feathers, or giving her her laudanum and wine-and-water.

There she lay moaning and shivering; and sometimes, as stupor stole over her, thinking that she was going to sleep for ever, and feeling half-frightened, half-thankful at the thought.

Mr. Mould was very much astonished when Little Spooney did not make her appearance at his shop. He talked over the matter with his friend the cobbler, telling Bob all about it that he knew himself.

'Depend upon it, she knows who prigged your pot, and won't come nigh ye for a bit for fear you should try to make her peach. Bless yer 'eart, you'll see her agin in a week or two, when she thinks it has blown hover.'

But the week or two passed; no Little Spooney made her appearance, and the old men were again talking of her.

'Sometimes I've thought,' said Mr. Mould, 'that she took it herself, after all; she's'ad the chance when she's come into the shop to sell her things; and then got frightened or sorry or somethink, and so brought it back, and trumped up that story about findin' it. So she would ha' found it, accordin' to their way o' talk.'

'I don't believe a word on it,' answered the cobbler. 'She ain't a gal to steal, or helse I'll eat this boot I'm a-solin', and that 'd be a tough job—any rate, now it's got my sole on it. Some folks say you can't trust looks, but that's on'y becos they ain't judges. That gal's face says she's honest, or my name ain't Bob Crisp. I've read as in some furrin parts—Chinee, I thinks—they writes up hover their shop-doors, "We don't cheat 'ere," and yet they're the biggest cheats goin'. But the little gal's face ain't like that. It don't brag about bein' honest. It's my belief as them as prigged your pot found out she'd giv' it back to ye, and so they've settled her—anyhow, that she's dead somehow. Do you know where she used to lodge?'

'Somewhere about 'ere, but I can't exac'ly say where,' answered Mr. Mould.

'Ah, there ain't much guide in that, is there, Mr. Mould?' replied Bob. 'There's a good many somewheres about 'ere.'

Bacon's Yard certainly was not far from Henley's Row, but the people who inhabited the two places were of entirely different classes. It was not necessary to be very high up in the social ladder to be able to 'look down upon' the Henley's Rowites, but they in their turn could look down on the Bacon's Yardites. No tidings of Little Spooney's calamity had reached Henley's Row. Indeed, had the ten-

ants of the two places been on intimate terms, it is doubtful whether the Bacon's Yardites would have thought it worth while to mention so trivial a matter as that a little match-girl had set her bed-clothes on fire, since she happened to be the only sufferer from the mishap.

One day, however, Bob Crisp saw little Sue passing his stall, and chanced to remember that he had seen her in company with Little Spooney. He called her back, and inquired after her friend.

'Law bless ye,' exclaimed Sue, 'she's a-bin in the 'orsespittle this hever so long. She ketched the thinx a-light when I was a-sleepin' wi' 'er. They say she was 'tosticated.'

In spite of his sorrow at hearing of the little girl's misfortune, the cobbler could not help smiling. She intoxicated—poor Little Spooney! He soon suppressed his smile, and obtained all the particulars little Sue could give him. Mr. Mould was out at the time, but as soon as he saw him enter his shop, Bob went across and told him what he had heard. The dealer in curios was as distressed as the cobbler, and on the following Sunday both the old men went to the hospital, Mr. Mould carrying a bag of oranges and a paper full of buns, and the less pecunious, but equally generous Bob, a pennyworth or two of sweetstuff.

The worst of the pain was over now. Mary could smile welcome on her acquaintances. They were a

queer pair for a little girl, but still they were the only people who had come expressly to see her. Every one else in the ward had 'friends' who came on visiting days, and, although she liked the clergyman and the cheery doctors, and idolised the kind Sister of her ward, Little Spooney had felt lonely—had been more forcibly reminded that she 'belonged' to nobody even than when she was trudging about the streets. Then, poor little soul, she was too busy by day and too weary at night to have much time to indulge in sentimental longings; but now when she saw her fellow-patients' friends sitting beside their beds, she could not help wishing that Mother could be the Sister, or that the Sister could be Mother, somehow.

Her friends scarcely knew her. There were terrible marks under her bandages, but the fire had spared her face, and this was what they had never seen it before—perfectly clean. Indeed they had never really seen her face, but only an outer crust of dirt. The difference was as great as that between a peeled and an unpeeled walnut; or, more literally, between a washed and an unwashed potato. The singeing which her hair had got, moreover, had done it no harm; it had been neatly cut and cleaned, and combed and brushed and parted, and the poor little street girl's face, for the first time in her life, had a fair chance of showing what was in it.

Certainly its look of honesty had not been washed away.

'I was a coming to ye about the pot, sir, when—' she began to whisper.

'There, we know all about that, an' don't you say a word about the pot, or we shall quarrel. Don't you talk about anything till a doctor comes and gives ye leave. I don't know much about little gals that has their bed-clothes caught a-fire, but I expec' you oughtn't to talk much yet, and if you was to before. ye ought, why ye see we shouldn't be let to come to see you any more. Bob and me-you remember Bob Crisp, the cobbler 1-well, there he is tother side o' your bed, grinnin' at ye; grinnin's the only thing Bob can do at all decent, and so he's al'ays grinnin' to show his pretty black teeth. Well, Bob and me've come jest to say 'ow sorry we was to 'ear what had 'appened to ye, an' try to cheer ye up a bit, and say we'll call agin if not hill-convenient. Don't she look well, Bob 1-a real little lady that the first lord in the land might call his daughter.'

'She looks huncommon well—I mean's far as looks goes; I'm sure I wish her 'ealth was better; but it's all stuff about your lords and ladies, Mr. Mould,' replied democratic Bob. 'Fine feathers don't al'ays make fine birds. For all their toggery I've seen young swells, gals as well as boys, as hugly as sin—miserable little wretches jist the colour

o' a taller candle. But, arter all, what do looks matter? It's the mind's the standard o' the man, whether you're a good sort o' cove or not; an' that don't go by birth nayther. A chap may be tol-lol hisself, an' yet 'ave a precious bad son, an' t'other way jist the same—swells as well as other folk, there's no difference.'

Conservative Mr. Mould had just begun to object to the last remark with, 'Now, you see, Bob, that's nonsense, because—' when the appearance of the Sister of the ward stopped him.

She was evidently 'a lady,' in the sense of the 'gentlewoman,' and her simple black dress and white cap brought out rather than disguised her 'distinguished' appearance, but Bob was the first to jump' up to do her reverence.

'I am glad to find that poor little Mary has some friends,' the Sister said; 'she is a dear, good, patient, little mite, and it seemed so dreary for her to be lying there without any one taking the trouble even to come to ask how she was getting on. Has not she a mother or a sister who could come to see her? Are you her grandfather?' turning to Mould, 'or you?' looking back at Crisp.

'No, ma'am, I ain't,' Bob answered, with a merry grin. 'Wish I was, poor little dear. I had a wife once, ma'am, as—well, p'r'aps, ma'am, wasn't quite the greatest comfort as ever a man was blessed with,

but I never had no children, an' so it stands to reason I can't have no grandchildren; wuss luck, pretty little dears!'

Tory Mr. Mould, however, good-natured though he was, was somewhat offended, or, perhaps, a better word would be shocked, that the Sister should think that he could be the grandfather of a waif like little Mary.

'The little gal don't belong to us in no ways, ma'am. Me an' my friend only know her from buyin' of her now and then, but she did me a service, and so I thought I'd look her up. I should ha' been 'ere long afore if I'd knowed where she was.'

'Well,' said the Sister, 'I am glad that the poor little girl has friends of any kind. We have not been able to learn anything about her, except that she was brought from a horrible place in Bacon's Yard.'

Then Mr. Mould told the story of the teapot, and, of course, the Sister did not think any the worse of Little Spooney when she had heard it.

'We've brought the little 'un two or three thinx— I s'pose she may 'ave 'em, ma'am,' said Mr. Mould, and the old men produced their offerings.

'Well, yes, there doesn't seem to be much harm in these,' replied the Sister. 'I will take charge of them for her. We have to watch our patients as they do the animals at the Zoological Gardens, to see that they have not anything improper given them. Their friends will smuggle in the most injurious things. They mean kindly, but it is a very cruel kindness.'

Although Mr. Mould had very hastily disowned Little Spooney as a relative, he was as kind to her as if she had been; indeed, she had two grandfathers, Bob almost always accompanying Mr. Mould on his visits to the hospital.

In spite of all the care and kindness which she received, however, little Mary still drooped. Her sores were healed, but her strength came back very slowly.

The Sister was talking the matter over one day with Mr. Mould.

'Little Mary has a strange longing for the country,' she said. 'The child thinks that she would get well if she were only there. And so I believe she would. I don't mean in a Convalescent Home, but boarded with some honest, kindly, cleanly cottagers really fond of children. I know a couple that would just do, and I'd send her there at once if I were not as poor as a church mouse.'

'I'm not a rich man, ma'am,' stammered Mr. Mould, 'but I'd go 'alves willin'.'

'Thank you, Mr. Mould; it is very good of you to say so, but I think we can manage the matter without encroaching on you. Though I am poor myself, I have a rich bachelor uncle, who lets me draw on his purse for my sick folk. I have applied to him so often lately that I am half ashamed to do so again.

so soon. But, after all, he has only his books besides to spend his money on, and I am sure he has plenty of those already. I'll write him a note at once—there is nothing like striking the iron while it is hot. Perhaps you will kindly leave it on your way home. My uncle has chambers in —— Inn.'

'Mr. Erskine!' exclaimed Mr. Mould, when he had read the address. 'Why, he's a customer o' mine, ma'am.'

(It was the pale scholar who had given Little Spooney silver for her violets.)

'All the better,' answered the Sister. 'You will be able to explain the circumstances fully to him.'

VL-IN THE COUNTRY.

Some people sneer at the benevolence of the purse as cheap, and so it is comparatively cheap when the giver withholds personal service which he is competent to give. But we must remember that some persons are not competent to give personal service, and that a good many people give neither service nor money. I am not sure that it is quite so easy to give money as some folks make out. I have noticed that the same people, in paying their just debts, often part with their pounds as if they were double teeth that were being drawn out one by one. 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,' they will unctuously remark; but 'a knock on the head' is, I think, the

object they must have in their minds. At any rate, though Mr. Erskine shirked district-visiting—and a most wretched district-visitor he would have made—it was, I think, a good thing that he was a liberal giver of money. He readily consented to provide means for his niece's protégée's journey into and stay in the country.

On a bright March day, on which the spring sunshine had found its way even into the dingy Waterloo Road, a cab drove up to the Waterloo Station, carrying the Sister, little Mary, and the box of clothes the Sister had provided for her. At the terminus Mary was committed to the special care of a guard, and soon was being hurried over grimy Lambeth and Vauxhall into the pleasant country.

She was in such a whirl of wonderment that she took in nothing distinctly until the train stopped at the station at which she was to alight. On the platform stood a sturdy, ruddy old fellow, dressed in faded velveteen, rusty-brown buskins that just covered the calf of the legs, and heavy-soled, tight-laced boots. This was John Alton, who, with his buxom wife, managed to get a sufficiency of food and drink, tolerably decent clothes, and very little else, except contentment, out of their few acres of freehold. He had been described to the guard, who instantly went up to him and said, 'Who are you looking for, old man?'

- 'A little gal as goos by the name o' Maary, as was gi'en thee by Miss Erskine to haand over.'
- 'All right, old man, here she is,' said the guard, and he handed over his charge.

He soon came back from the luggage-van with her trunk, and a few minutes afterwards Mary was seated beside John in his funny little cart, behind his funny little pony—very much like a magnified rat.

- 'I hope thou'lt feel at hoam, little un. We'll try to mak thee,' said John. 'Miss Erskine be a real kind lady.'
 - 'That she be,' earnestly answered Mary.
- 'And Mr. Erskine be a kind gentleman, too, though he be zo took up wi' books. He's got dree or vowr varms hereabouts, and a better landlord, they zay, there can't be, and he doan't mind what he zend doon for the pooer.'

After the exchange of these confidences, Mary felt quite at home with John Alton, and half-an-hour afterwards she was quite as much at home with his wife.

The good couple had longed for children, but had never had any, and if Little Spooney had indeed been, in Mr. Mould's phrase, a little lady, she could not have had more attention shown her.

The old people almost quarrelled for her company, and vied with one another in providing for her comfort. What a singular experience for Little Spooney,

of Bacon's Yard! She had had great kindness shown her in the hospital; but, except in the Sister's case, it had been for most part of an official kind, and she had been too ill to get *enjoyment* out of it.

Now she was getting well, and was with people who had ceased to look upon her as the little girl recommended by kind Miss Erskine, and paid for by kind Mr. Erskine, ceased to do so almost the first day after her arrival, and who really seemed to love her—her, the homeless little London street-seller—for her own sake.

She pottered about with John in his funny little, many-cropped plot of land, chatted with him whilst he harnessed or groomed and fed his funny little pony, made up its funny little bed, and washed or mended his funny little cart, and soon was intrusted with the sole charge of chaining and unchaining the great dog—a terror to country tramps, but, after a very brief acquaintance, as mild as milk to the whilom little London vagrant. She trotted after Dame Alton into the droll little dairy, and into the droll little farmyard to milk and look after the two cows and the calf, and to feed the pigs and the pigeons, and the poultry, and into the lane to hunt for eggs which truant hens might have laid in the ditches or on the hedge-banks.

And then, as she grew stronger, she was free to wander far and wide in the country for which she had so often longed in dingy London. It sometimes

seemed like a sweet dream to her, but then would come the added delight of the thought, 'No, it's all true.' Up through the beech-wood on to the breezy down, with its musical tinkle of sheep-bells, and in summer and autumn, its myriads of hair-bells trembling over the slippery, fragrant turf, and its outlook over miles of wooded plain with other downs sloping into it like headlands into the sea; through cornfields, when Mary went to the Altons', just beginning to be lined with green, into the quaint, many-gabled village street, with here and there a cottage peeping from the midst of an orchard like a bird's nest from a bush; over the village-green with the Three Sisters elms in the middle, and the hoary tombstones and green grave-boards clustered about the little woodenturreted church, peeping over the mossy churchyard wall on one side, and on the other the mellow-red rectory peeping out through a spy-hole cut in its high hedge; past the pound and the rotten fungusbuttoned stocks, and the dilapidated cage, and the outlying blacksmith's forge, with its cheerful glow and roar of flame, and tinkle of hammers, down to the old grey, wooden bridge spanning a silvery troutstream bottomed with golden gravel; across, and down again through winding lanes, and past quarries and hop-gardens, and drowsy old farmhouses whose gables seemed to nod, into a remnant of primeval forest, and a sandy, heathery, furzy waste, pitted with

black bogs, in which old forest trees lay buried, and wide sedgy pools haunted by flocks of wild fowl; and beyond that again up into pleasant pastures and hay-meadows hedged with hawthorn and honeysuckle, dogrose and bryony; such was the delightful variety of country Mary had to ramble over.

'Can I really be the same little girl that used to sell violets?' she thought, as she gathered them with the ring-dove cooing overhead. To have nothing to do but wander about seeing the sights, hearing the sounds she best loved-it was a marvellous life to Mary, and though she did not put her gratitude into words, her heart sang a continual song of praise and thanksgiving. Everything was so fresh to her, and yet somehow seemed linked to her vague recollections of having been carried about the country when an infant by her mother. But those recollections were very, very vague. Mary realised the country for the first time during her visit to the Altons. almond, the apricot, and the peach-tree blossomed. the cock-pheasant crowed, crows built, trout leaped. gorgeous peacock butterflies fluttered hither and thither, the aspen trembled, the bony-branched gooseberry bushes, the smoother currant bushes in the garden were sprinkled with delicate green, and then came what Mary called their funny-looking flowers; Alton lifted her that she might peep into a blackbird's nest with eggs in it, she saw a snake

wriggling in the forest, and came upon great patches of wild hyacinth and fragile wood anemone; speedwell peeped from between the grass-blades on the hedge-banks, the meadows were golden with crowfoot. and afterwards, when she started at the first call of the cuckoo, lilac with lady's smock; the martins came back to their bulging nest beneath the cottage eaves, the swallows built in the barn, swifts zigzagged and shrieked high in air, and the sand-martins flew in and out of their holes in the quarries; there was a constant chorus of birds from morning to night; she heard the nightingale sing by moonlight, and snipe piping in the bogs; she saw glowworms shining: she gathered cowslips by the handful, Lent lilies hung their glowing heads in the Rectory garden, the glossy-leaved periwinkle that trailed along at the foot of the churchyard wall was starred with blue, and the delicate blossoms of the wood-sorrel and the milky blossom of the wild strawberry whitened the forest grass; blackthorn and whitethorn came out in the hedges; the pear-tree on the gable end of the cottage, the plum-trees and cherry-trees, and apple-trees in the orchard arrayed themselves in their spring snow, or white and pink; she heard the bees buzzing around the blossoms of the sycamore—a marvellous March and April were those to little Mary.

But, perhaps, little Mary's strangest experience

at first was going to church. Leaving off work once a week to get a rest, she could understand; but why people should come for miles to sit down and stand up, and sing together, and have something said to them out of a book, was a mystery to her.

But by the time the rolling weeks had brought their full foliage to the trees, and the doors and windows could be left open during service-time, letting in the lulling sound of the leaves rustling in drowsy restlessness, and the sweet scents which the warm wind had gathered in its leisurely wanderings over the bean-fields and the honeysuckled hedges, little Mary had grown fond of her church, and sang in it like a little lark—that is, if larks, besides singing vigorously, sang also slightly out of time and tune.

In the course of that pleasant summer Mary had a pleasant surprise. Mr. Mould and Bob Crisp, availing themselves of an excursion train, paid her a pop visit.

In the autumn following she had another surprise. Mr. Erskine came down on some business connected with his farms, and brought his niece with him. Mary was delighted to see her kind nurse once more, but the delight was not unmixed. She feared that she was about to be removed from the new home to which she had become so much attached.

'Well, Alton,' said Mr. Erskine, taking out his



ETTY IN THE CASTLE.

AM going to tell you about a little girl who lived all alone with her grandmother in a great old red and grey square castle. Part of it was in ruins, and little trees, as well as grass and ivy, wallflowers and nightshade and houseleek and stonecrop, grew upon the walls. The justice-room, the library,

the chapel, the armoury, some cells that had once been used as the town gaol, and the three little rooms in which Mrs. Page and our little Etty lived, were the only parts of the castle that were sound. Mrs. Page had charge of the castle, dusted the books and so on, locked up at night, and took visitors over it. Etty had lived in the castle as long as she could remember, and knew all the stories about it quite as well as her grandmother. Some of them were rather dreary, and when the days were drawing in in autumn, and in the dark winter evenings, she felt very pleased

when she had got back with her grandmother from her locking-up rounds and was securely locked in their own snug little rooms, with fire burning and candles lighted, hissing kettle on the hob and teatray on the table, in their little parlour. But in broad daylight, and especially on dreamy summer afternoons, Etty liked to ramble all over the great ruinous place. sitting down every now and then on the broad. cracked flagstones or the sun-warmed Roman bricks. and picturing to herself her old stories. On very fine days she ventured to go down a few steps of the subterranean passage, and peer into the utter darkness that was said to stretch along for miles. Indeed, she did not like to think of the subterranean passage at night: with that open, the castle never seemed properly locked up. The deep Roman well, also, frightened her, and yet it fascinated her. She could just make out the dim water at the bottom, and it seemed to her like a slily wicked eye tempting her to jump down. Nevertheless, holding on to the winch-prop very tight, she felt forced to look down, and she used to fling down stones and hold her breath until, after tinkling from side to side of the rough shaft, they plopped into the water with a splash. and a hollow echo came up as if the well was complaining. There was nothing interesting in the empty modern cells; but Etty used to creep down into the old dungeons under the keep, in spite of the

darkness and the toads and other slimy things she came across. The damp air was so still down there that Etty could hear the sharp little cry of the bat as it brushed across her face. Some of her most interesting stories were about people who had been prisoners in those dreary places. One was about a lady who had been locked up there for years, because she would not give up some property that belonged to her little son. When the son grew up to be a man, he besieged the castle and took it; but when he opened the door of his mother's dungeon, the poor lady was quite mad, and did not know him, and soon afterwards she died, and her corpse was all that her brave son carried back to the home she had secured for him at the cost of being locked up for life. Etty used to cry a good deal over that story. The justice-room had once been the banqueting hall. It had been fitted with broad modern windows and the ordinary appliances of a modern magistrates' court. durst not say so, but she sorely regretted these changes. Of course, she had been brought up to look upon the county magistrates as beings only a very little lower than the angels; but still they were not a bit like the handsome 'ancient warriors' of her imagination. White hats turned up at the rim, red faces with mutton-chop whiskers, stiffly starched checked cravats, blue coats with brass buttons, topboots just like the pair the butcher wore—Extry's generation of English country gentlemen, she thought with fear and trembling, had grown sadly unpicturesque. The library had not been a library in the old times, of course, but the room had not been hacked about like the justice-room, and the old books and the old rafters made it more to her taste. She used to trot about after her grandmother dusting. The books needed a good deal of looking after, since on the lower tiers the rats had taken the tall folios in the rear, and gobbled great bits out of them. were no books in the library that Etty could have read with much enjoyment, even if her grandmother would have allowed her; but she liked to glance at them. Some of them were unmistakably in 'furrin tongues,' as Mrs. Page phrased it, and on these Etty gazed with awe, mingled with disappointment. But now she would stumble on an English book in black letter, and hesitatingly make out a sentence, and feel almost as proud as if she had been translating at sight 'from the original Greek.' And then she would get hold of a fat quarto, or dumpy duodecimo, 'printed something like books are printed now, Granny,' and admire the big capital letters in the middle of funny little pictures, and wonder at the bad spelling, and the s's like f's, and the marks and letters up above the lines, and the sheets of writing-paper pasted in. and the strips of writing-paper with which the thin. grey, yellow-freckled pages were patched like an Irishman's head with diachylon plaster the day after a 'free fight.'

Very few people ever came to read in the library; now and then a clergyman, old or young, or a local antiquary who would pat Etty's head when she dusted their chairs for them, and give her pennies, and laugh when she asked what books she should bring them, and say they thought they had better save her the trouble.

This sometimes made Etty indignant. 'I don't know the books to speak to, Granny,' she would say; 'but I know ever so many of them by sight.' The most frequent reader in the library, however, was the Catholic priest, a courteous, dark, handsome, Spanishlooking man, who was quite as ready as the English clergyman to make a pet of Etty, only Etty, influenced by her grandmother, wouldn't let him. Mrs. Page, having been instructed by the magistrates to show the priest every civility, of course, obeyed the letter of their instructions, but she was a civil icicle. What was her wonder and secret disgust, then, when she found that, on the eve of an election, the borough member, 'a fine old English gentleman' of the boxing and fox-hunting school, had challenged the priest to a controversy in the castle library, on the merits of their respective faiths? Mrs. Page and Etty, and the 'helps' that were sent in, bustled about to get the library ready for a crowd. The eventful day came. The local gentry flocked in in some force; a few of the few local Catholics occupied the seats in fairness reserved for them. Up got honest Sir Henry, and blustered out a lot of honest nonsense. Etty's kind clerical triends had assiduously crammed him, but he had not been able to assimilate his food. He was loudly cheered, however, by the Protestant party. most of whom looked very much relieved when he sat down. Then up rose the priest and glided through a few smooth sentences, which the Catholic party seemed to think had a great deal of covert sting in them, and applauded as loudly as their numbers would permit. He finished off with a compliment to his 'honest antagonist,' and then Sir Henry got up and blurted out a compliment to his 'able opponent,' and offered to shake hands with him. Whereupon the member and the priest shook hands heartily, and the company filed out of the create library, leaving Mrs. Page in a state of stupefaction, and Etty as much at sea as ever as to the comparative merits of the Catholic and Protestant creeds.

The chapel was Etty's favourite place. No service was held in it in her time, but she used to go into it, especially on a Sunday afternoon, and dream of the hundreds who had attended service there. The brasses of some of them were still blue and green upon the walls; the arms, names, and epitaphs,

almost obliterated, of others, still scarred the flagstones of the little aisles. A slimy, noseless knight still crossed his armed heels in the little chancel. Dreamy little Etty would sit for hours on a wormeaten muniment-chest (whose contents were a bluemoulded cavalry saddle, a rusty lock, and a bent, verdigrised brass candle-sconce), listening to the death-watches ticking in the carved-oak seats grown grey with age, and looking fascinated, half by fun and half by fear, at the grinning gargoyles. But she had a healthier place to dream in.

Up some cracked, chipped, iron-clamped stone steps, along a ruinous brick-arched gallery, out on to the top of what was left of the castle-wall, and there Etty found herself in her garden; a patch of mould, shaded by a silver birch that somehow had planted itself there, which she had made gay with snapdragon, candytuft, bluebells, convolvuluses, cowslips, primroses, daisies, foxgloves, honeysuckles, gillyflowers, flanks, pinks, roses, lilies, lavender, love-liesbleeding, marigolds—any flowers she could get hold of; and almost every one who came on business to the castle, and knew the little maid's love for flowers, was willing, indeed anxious, to gratify it. Etty liked the people who came on business far better than the few flippant strangers who came sight-seeing. There was a tradition that Joseph of Arimathæa, on his road to Glastonbury, had stopped to rest at the castle, and to a monday and Pupe televel as firmly as she can be not seve I estimated that the flippant that we can be successful in the young men among the value of the companied chair in Mrs. The young men among the value of the can be made to imperiment politicess, if we can visit be seen in Armanness set upon ?

the large stage that I surrectly reply which personally account these plant stations—' Young new lessent a summation a membraci in Scriptur'. Here a parent of a large term pressions what I has an alternation.

The money period and could look down on the apply soil to ver stocked with many a siege-marked mount to ver on the weedy, religiously. Intered castle paintaining to the freen patch in the inner bailey specked with two whole stones, marking the spots where Ethy's two chief heroes, the Cavalier leaders who held out against the Parliament forces, were shot, in spite of their plack and their lovely long love-locks, in cold blood by Fairfax, when he took the starving rat-cat-dog-and-leather-eating town; on the ragged line of the Roman-bricked town wall which the Roundheads could not quite blow up even after they had become masters of the position; and out on the grass-grown mounds in the distance from which the Parliamentary cannon used to blaze away at the

church-towers—the only one within range that escaped being swathed in woolsacks. Etty knew nothing about subjects' wrongs, or of her town's being held by the Cavaliers against the townsmen's will, or of church-towers being turned into batteries, and so she worshipped the long-locked Cavaliers, and thought Cromwell and Fairfax first cousins of the —well, suppose we say, the Naughty Person.

Of course, the castle had a ghost, and little Etty believed in ghosts. She was a little girl ever so long ago, you must remember.

The castle ghost was that of a Roundhead spy. He had somehow got into the town, indeed into the inner bailey, during the siege, and was anxious to get out again, but did not know his way. He had met a little girl, and given her a kiss and a silver penny, and asked her to show him a safe way out. The little girl had pretended to be very fond of him, but had led him straight to a guard-room in which the King's troopers were carousing, and they had killed him at Ever since, a little after midnight, his ghost sight. had walked through the castle. Etty was not exactly sorry that the Roundhead had been killed—he was a Roundhead, and, besides, he was sneaking. she was sorry that a little girl—a little girl on the King's side, moreover-had been sneaking, too; and Etty was very much afraid of the Roundhead's ghost.

One night, after midnight, Mrs. Page feebly called

must pass along the corridor in which the Roundhead ghost walked, right through the ruins of the guardhouse, in which the betrayed Roundhead spy had been killed. But she would kill granny if she did not go at once for the doctor. Nervous as she was. Etty was a braye little girl when those she loved were concerned. With trembling, but still sure. fingers, she slipped the smaller key off the ring, kissed her poor groaning grandmother, softly closed her bedroom door, double-locked their outer door, and then, with her heart in her mouth, rushed along the haunted corridor. On one of the pillars the moonlight made the ivy look just like a Roundhead waiting to catch her. She felt ready to sink into her shoes. 'I will go, though,' she screamed, and darted past it. The night wind sent a bunch of ivy round her neck as she rushed past. 'I will go,' she screamed again, as she shook herself free. 'Granny is ill!' She darted along, dashed down a step or two, put her key into the lock of the little door, opened it, sprang down its steps, flashed past the white stones of the inner bailey, feeling that she had got amongst friends once more, and so scampered, by a roundabout rout, into Castle Lane, and along High Street into Head Street, where she leaped like a trout at the doctor's bell.

Etty kept her wits about her until the bell was answered and her message told. The doctor answered the bell himself, carried Etty up into a

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bedroom, kissed her, muttered a few instructions to his wife, and then started for the castle.

It was not long before Mrs. Page grew well under the doctor's care. Etty had both doctor's and doctor's wife's care, but it was long before she grew well. She did grow well again, however, and when she went back to the castle, she no longer believed in castle ghosts.





THE WRECK OF THE 'PROSPERO.' AN OLD SAILOR'S STORY.

HE narrowest squeak for my life I ever had, you'd like to hear about; would you, young sir? Well, I've had so many that it's hard to pick. Hold on, though. When the *Prospero* went down I was nigher death for longer at a time than I ever was afore or since. *Pros-*

pero was the name of a ship, you'll understand, called after one of the Roman emperors. She wasn't a good 'un to go, but she was a good 'un to sail in. She stood up out of the water like a barn, and her fo'c's'le was as dry as your ma's parlour. She was one of the old-fashioned sort that you don't often see now; one of them with a cro'jack, and bows as bluff as her starn. Made by the mile and cut off as wanted, like a bar of soap, is the sailor's joke about them old craft; but they were a deal comfortabler

· ful young widow lady and her son. Wimborne was their name. Charles Villiers Wimborne the little boy was called; but we always called him Charlie when his ma weren't by, because he liked it best short like that. A fine, handsome little boy he was-not over strong, but as game as a young lion. It wasn't long afore he was for ever swarming up the rigging. Mild as milk, and as merry as a kitten, he was mostly; but put his monkey up, and he'd look as black as thunder, and talk as big as any grown-up swell. As for Mrs. Wimborne, she was kind and gentle to everybody. She'd do all sorts of little odd jobs for us, and come into the fo'c's'le of a Sunday afternoon, and read the Bible to us, and talk to us. Of a week-day, too, she'd talk to us, when she came across us-just for a yarn sometimes, and at other times about not swearing, and so on; and yet not a bit in a preachy sort of way. It ain't often that sailors get any one to talk to them like that—as if they really thought they were the same flesh and blood. But when they do they value it. I've seen a man that was just going to rap out an oath, when he caught sight of Mrs. Wimborne, stop himself, and job his lips up and down like a rabbit's nose, till he looked fit to bursthe'd such hard work to keep it in. Mrs. Wimborne's husband had been a captain—a captain in the army. He'd come invalided from India to Sydney, and there he died, and so she and Charlie were going

ti ilede Ieia Elw oo — Millerioo Charla sali—geb So the leader his faiter hi r so many jurjie his ma h to it lath an i thin to see o o o e o li un though. I reco in ke about it. We use the same at the cooky, that they Common Addiscomile. Po. the character was after him. ... was the easie service Leginning and th . · · s in Port Jackson Throw shave off th is nown Middle Head

the Weather. For days and days together the Prospero had a heap of canvas on her, alow and aloft, and we'd scarcely to trim it, much less touch it. Now and then the mate-he was the fondest of cracking on-got more than seven knots out of her, and that was reckoned tolerable fast sailing in them days. Well, so we'd got along till we were almost in sight of land, as was calkilated, and then there came a change. I'd had my trick at the wheel in the second dog-watch, and I'd seen that the weather was getting nasty. When eight bells struck, and the t'other chap came to relieve me, 'You'll have to keep your eyes open, mate,' says I. 'There'll be two of you here afore long. She's been kicking as hard as I could hold, this half hour. The old man will soon shorten sail. I bet.'

So I gave him his course, and went for ards, and tumbled in all standing. Afore four bells, I heard a thumping overhead, and the mates bellowing, 'Watch below, tumble out!' The mate didn't like taking in sail as a rule—he said the old man was as narvous as an old woman—but he was spry enough at it that night. He ran up with us to bear a hand at the mainsail. A dirty night we had—both watches on deck; and the weather kept on getting nastier as the day broke. The passengers came up, looking as white as chalk, but the skipper soon sent them down again. Charlie managed somehow to slip up again, though.

'Bill,' says he to me, 'can't I do something? Mamma's keeping the other people quiet, and I want to be of some use. I don't like sticking down there like a little girl. Can't I do something, Bill?' says he.

'Yes, Master Wimborne,' says I, 'you can. You can bundle down into the cabin again as fast as ever your legs will take you, and look after your dear ma; and the very minute you can be of use, I'll come and fetch you.'

I admired the pluck of the young chap, when men that would have made four of him were funking, and so I didn't like to wound his feelings. We'd no time to strike bells; the gale did that for us pretty often; but I should say it was about two o'clock in the morning, when the wind went round right ahead. and we were taken aback. A nice pummelling the poor old *Prospero* got. The sea pooped her, and the whole starn of her seemed to be smashed in. Anyhow, she wouldn't answer her helm when she floundered up again-wouldn't steer, no more than a log, and she was leaking like a sieve. When the carpenter sounded the pumps, there was pretty nigh a fathom of water in her. The skipper soon bundled up the men passengers then, to help us at the pumps. Charlie didn't wait for bundling. You should have seen how that dear boy worked, and his dear ma, when all the other women were screeching and getting in the way,

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was lugging up bedding and such like, to shove into the leaks, when we could find 'em, as quietly as if she was a housemaid putting 'em out to air in the back-garden. She was a real brave, good woman. She'd got no fear of death, because she was so good, and yet she set to work so sensible to save the ship if she could. She did just what she could do, and made no fuss about it, giving you a quiet little look and word as she went by, that kept your heart up more than a glass of grog. Thinks I to myself-'Surely the ship can't go down with a saint that has got her wits about her like that aboard.' We had the hatches off precious quick, and overboard went the wool bales as fast as we could pitch 'em. We didn't stop to tick off the 'R. B.'s' in diamonds and such like, I can assure ye. We didn't care about brands; what we wanted was to get at the leaks. As soon as we found them, we crammed everything we could lay hands on into them, and the caulking seemed to be of some use for a bit. The pumps got the water a little under. The gale—it was a real hurricane went down a little, and we began to hope that we might weather it after all. But out it burst again, and over went the old ship on her side, with the masts right in the water, as you might flip down a card. 1 thought she'd fill; but we cut away the masts, and up she came again. It was all up with her, though: the sea kicked her about like a wet ball.

Then most of the men, and of the men passengers as well, made a rush at the grog, and set to work as if they wanted to drink themselves mad-drunk. Some of the women took to the spirits too. The last time I saw the second mate and the carpenter and the boatswain's mate, they were doing the same. There was a horrid row on board—men and women howling, and fighting, and screeching, and the ship just going down! The old man and the mate and the boatswain kept their heads, and, thank God, I managed to keep mine.

- 'Save my boy, Bill!' says poor Mrs. Wimborne to me, bursting out crying for the first time.
- 'Him and you both, ma'am,' says I, 'or we'll all go down together.'
 - 'God bless you, Bill !' says she.
 - 'God bless you, ma'am,' says I.
- 'We're in His hands,' says she, getting calm again, 'and whatever He wills is best.'

She was a woman, talking quiet like that, and the men and the other women drinking themselves mad because they were so scared. Little Charlie clutched hold of his ma, when she began to cry. 'I'll never leave you, mamma!' says he. He was very pale and quiet, but he kept a firm upper lip to the very last. The skipper got out two boats at last. The mate was to go in one, and the boatswain in the other. I was told off for the boatswain's boat. The other

boats were to be got out if they could afterwards. The old man was a game old chap, and never lost his narve. 'Women and children!' he bellows, standing by the gangway; but when the men that were sober enough made out that there were two boats bobbing alongside, they made a rush. The old man knocks down the first half-dozen like bullocks, and the boatswain and me helps him. The mate and his crew were in their boats, but me and the boatswain were waiting for that to shove off. I wanted to see Charlie and his ma clear of the ship.

Then the old man lugs out a pistol, and, says he, 'The man that tries to get into the boats before all the women and children are in, I'll shoot him like a dog!'

And he looked as if he meant it. That kept them back for a bit, and without their rush it was hard enough work to get the poor creatures in. The boat bobbed up and down so, and they were so scared. Mrs. Wimborne and Charlie stopped to the last, hand-in-hand, as still as carved images.

- 'Now, ma'am,' says the skipper, 'and good-bye!'
- 'Good-bye!' she says to him; but then she turns round, and gives Charlie a clinging kiss, and wants him to be put in first.
- 'No, ma'am,' says I, 'I'll lower you first, and him into your lap.' I'd just got her in when there came another rush, and it was as much as I could do to log

Charlie out of the scrimmage. The skipper had been knocked down, and was just getting on his legs again when I says to him, 'Where's the boat, sir?' says I.

'Gone down,' says he. 'The blackguards leaped into her and swamped her.'

Poor little Charlie didn't hear; what with the weather and the men's howling, there was such a horrid row.

'Won't you come, sir?' I says to the skipper as I went over the side with Charlie.

'No,' says he, 'I'll stick by the ship so long as there's a man in her. They don't deserve it, the drunken brutes.'

And them's the last words I ever heard the poor old skipper say. We'd to shove off in a hurry, or we should have been swamped too, and we hadn't pulled a cable's length from the ship before she gave a roll this way and that way, and then a plunge for'ards, and then up came her head as if she didn't like the water, and then down she went starn foremost, and, for all the storm, we could hear the poor drunken critters yelling fit to make your blood run cold. The last I saw of the old skipper, he was standing with his cap off, and his grey hair flying about, holding on to the stump of the mainmast. That was the end of the old *Prospero*.

Presently says Charlie-

^{&#}x27;Where's mamma's boat, Bill?'

- 'Oh,' says I, 'what we 've got to do is to get ashore, and then you'll hear about your ma. You'll soon be with her.' God forgive me for deceiving the poor boy; and yet, after all, it wasn't a lie, as things turned out.
- 'But was mamma's boat as good as this?' says Charlie.
- 'Every bit,' says I; and there wasn't no lie in that, for she'd gone down in the long boat, poor lady, and ours was one of the quarter-boats. After that, it was astonishing to see the quiet pluck of that young chap. He was always looking for ard to getting ashore. He didn't seem half as afraid of the sea that was on as I was; though, to be sure, I knew more of the danger than he did. He'd keep on baling till his little arms must have been fit to drop out of the sockets, all the time some of the great lubbers we'd got aboard would lie washing about at the bottom of the boat, and you couldn't kick them up, 'cept 'twas to get something to eat and drink, and then they didn't want no kicking. It wasn't much they got-it wasn't much any of us got that had worked for it. There was a bit or two of salt beef that I'd pulled out of the harness cask as I went by, and there was the bottom of a sack of biscuit, and three bottles of rum. and a beaker of water, and that's all we had. long as it lasted, I looked out that Charlie got his fair whack, and nobody grudged it to him, sharp-sex

as we were, 'cept the lazy, greedy skulkers. Of course we ate the beef raw, and till you're pretty nigh starving, young sir, you'll have no notion of how men can squabble over a half inch of raw salt beef. But it was all gone at last, and yet we hadn't made the land. After the gale in which the ship went down, there'd been no rain; weak as we got for want of food, the want of drink was worse. The boatswain was shaping a course for Falmouth, to the best of his belief, and calkilated, when the ship went down, that if the boat wasn't swamped, and we could keep on pulling, turn and turn about, we might get there in three days. Perhaps we might have done it if those great cowardly skulkers could have been kicked into pulling an oar. I can't say. All I know about our position was from what I'd heard when the sun was took two days afore the ship went down. And most like that was all the boatswain knew either. Anyhow, when we'd been five days at sea, pulling—them as had the spunk and the sense enough to pull-and that poor little Charlie baling away like a fire-engine, we'd got no sight of land, though the sea-weed that was about made us think it couldn't be far off somewheres. By morning on the sixth day, though the boatswain had 'lowanced it as fairly as he could, all our provisions was gone. Morning after poor little Charlie died. The poor child was dead-beat by the hunger, and the wet, and the cold, and the baling he

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kept at, when he was awake, as long as he could stir his poor little arms. He'd been sleeping off and on all night, and just as the sun came up, threatening more wind, the little chap says to me, says he:—

'Give dear mamma my love; tell her I tried to do my best.'

I'd hard work to make him out; but, when I did, says I:—

'Master Charlie, my brave boy, you'll see her afore me. She's gone to heaven first, and there she's a-waiting for ye.'

The little chap, weak as he was, gave a start, and then he gave a little smile, and then he died. Soon as ever I felt sure he was dead, I pitched him overboard; for some of the chaps aboard was looking wicked at him, as if they'd like to eat him. Perhaps we should have come to eating one another, if the boat had lived much longer. But the wind rose again, as I'd guessed it would, from the look of the sun. We were too busy keeping ourselves from drowning to think about starving.

The last thing I remember that night was tugging away at the stroke-oar, and feeling it melting away like. When I came to myself again—I can't say whether it was next morning or a week afterwards—I was lying, with my clothes all torn to bits, on a narrow shelf-like rock, with the sea spitting up at me, and a great wall of cliff, like half-a-dozen bonded

warehouses, one a-top of the other, and just going to tumble, overhead. Presently I saw something dangling about three yards off—a rope with a bit of timber at the bottom, and a pole lashed on the line. meant for me,' thinks I, 'and if it ain't, I'll jump at it—it's my last chance. Our Father 'ch art in Heaven!' So I jumped, and I grabbed it, and them that had lowered it began to haul me up, and I fended off from the cliff the best way I could with the pole. I brought out a lot of screaming sea-gulls and gannets and such, black, white, and grey. They whirled about just like when you tear up a letter into little bits, and fling it out o' window. There was a couple of eagles that come at me with their eyes like hot coals, and I thought they'd ha' pecked out mine. But I was hauled up safe, and then, so far as I could understand the men's talk. I found I'd been washed ashore on the west coast o' Ireland.

Them's the kind of things you must make up your mind to put up with, if you follow a seafaring life, young man.





MASTER EPHRAIM BINES, JUNIOR.



PHRAIM BINES was a jobbing gardener: an honest, hard-working, but very obstinate old fellow, and by no means sweet-tempered. His Jim Crow hat had no jauntiness in it, but brooded on his grizzled head like a rusty, draggletailed raven. His face was very much

like a scowling knocker, and when he was in a very bad temper, he had a habit of fingering his stubbly chin, as if he were feeling for the knocker-ring. There were sullen wrinkles in his velveteen waistcoat and his corduroy breeches; his brown leather buskins frowned in every button; and his heavy, tight-laced boots descended on the earth with a solemnly slow, elephant-like thud, which seemed to say, 'There, Ephraim Bines has put his foot down, and Ephraim Bines would like to see the man that could make him move it until he chooses to lift it up again.'

The old ladies whose gardens he did up stood in awe of Ephraim. They durst not for their lives ask him to raise the vegetables they wanted to be raised. or to arrange their flower-beds as they wanted them to be arranged. They were obliged to be content with just such flowers, and shrubs, and fruit, and vegetables as Ephraim chose to permit their gardens to provide them with. If interfered with in the slightest degree, Ephraim would either shoulder his tools (although half the lawn might still be unmown) and march home in a huff, or else he would take his revenge in a massacre of the innocents, ruthlessly tearing up and cutting down huge clumps of his offending employer's favourite flowers. Nothing annoyed Ephraim more than when friends of his employers made them presents of cuttings with which If one of these botanical unhe was not familiar. welcome little strangers was produced in Ephraim's presence, he would take it between his thumb and finger, hold it at arm's length as if he could not bear the smell of it, sniff contemptuously, snort indignantly, and then unceremoniously fling the cutting over the garden-wall, with the supercilious remark-'It's naught better than a stinkin', outlandish weed -that 's what that is, mum, whoever give it to ye.'

It was in vain to attempt clandestine planting of these aliens. Ephraim was sure to find them out, in whatever secluded corners they might be concealed; and then down came his hoe upon them like a headsman's axe. Competition might have taken some of the conceit out of Master Ephraim, but there was no other jobbing gardener for three or four miles round Sloefield, and so Ephraim had completely at his mercy all the Sloefielders who owned gardens which they could not keep in order themselves.

If Ephraim gave himself such airs in other people's places, it might be supposed that he was monarch of all he surveyed in his own home. And so he was to a large extent, but still there was a tiny rebel there. Ephraim's meek-spirited little wife was dead, but whilst she lived she would scarcely have dared to say that it was hot or cold, if Ephraim had not said so before her. His eldest daughter, Jemima, who kept house for him, was almost as ill-tempered as her father, but she was afraid to vent her ill-temper upon him, saving it all for her sisters and her brother. The second daughter, Kezia, was as meek-spirited as her mother had been. The youngest, Keren-happuch. was a roguish little puss; she greatly enjoyed mischief when somebody else did it, but took precious good care not to get into a scrape herself. little Ephraim who was the enfant terrible of the family; and yet old Ephraim liked young Ephraim better than any other of his children, and got quite angry with Jemima when night after night she rushed to meet him with a fresh list of her little brother's

She had been obliged to give up spankmisdeeds. ing him on her own account, since latterly for every spank she had received two vigorous kicks upon her shins. So, as she could not punish him herself, she was very eager to get him floggings from his father, and although old Ephraim, who was a stanch believer in 'Spare the rod and spoil the child,' was often compelled by his conscience, as he phrased it, to flog his little boy, he did not like the job. For one thing, when little Ephraim was born, his mother had died: and, perhaps, old Ephraim, remembering that he had not given his poor wife the happiest of lives, would have liked to try to fancy that he was offering some kind of amends by making much of her last child. For another thing, young Ephraim, in sullen obstinacy, and in tricks of manner, down even to the fingering of the chin, was just old Ephraim in miniature; and the father was proud of his likeness.

A very peculiar young gentleman was Master Ephraim Bines, jun. Keren-happuch got all the fun out of the mischief that he did. Her brother in his wildest pranks looked as grave as a judge. Unhasting, unresting, he was almost always (except when he was asleep) stolidly striving to annoy some one or other, as if from a sense of duty. In short, Master Ephraim Bines, jun., was an insufferable little nuisance, who ought to have been flogged about a dozen times a day.

He kept quiet whilst his father was at home, but old Ephraim generally went away to work before his children had finished their breakfast, and then young Ephraim began his day's labour. He scooped the sugar out of Jemima's tea-cup when she was not looking, and put wood ashes in instead. He peppered Kezia's and Keren-happuch's bread and milk. got under the table, and pinched his sisters all round with great impartiality—except that he always gave Jemima the hardest pinches. If he could manage to give the cloth a sly jerk, that brought the breakfast things into Jemima's lap, or down upon the floor, Ephraim was satisfied with his morning's indoor performance, and went out to employ himself in openair mischief until it was time to start for school. If not, he busied himself in pulling the pins out of his sister's knitting, snipping their frocks on the sly into fire-paper patterns, and other such brotherly attentions. He was always ready to start for school with Kerenhappuch. They took their dinners with them, and so Ephraim was free to spend the day as hepleased. As a rule he played truant every fine day, but his sister told no tales, and, after a bit, the governess did not complain either. She was too glad to be rid of Ephraim's company, since, when at school, he was always spilling the ink over copy-books; setting everybody's teeth on edge by scratching his pencil down his slate, fastening his class-fellows to their seats with cobbler's wax; tilting up the infants' form, and sending all the poor little infants sprawling; flashing the sunlight, when the clouds broke, into Miss Mavor's face with a piece of looking-glass; and firing potato-pellets at her spectacles out of a quill popgun. When Ephraim did not choose to go to school, he amused himself by tying the rusty kettles he picked out of the ditches to stray dogs' tails; scaring geese; cutting off donkeys' clogs; unhasping meadow gates, that horses and cows might stray out into the road; driving them, when he could do so without being seen, into corn, and clover, and lucerne fields, and grass left for cutting; and gathering snails by the half-gallon, to empty into the old ladies' gardens which his father was so proud of because he was the real master of them; and when the old ladies had their garden-gates painted, young Ephraim could not rest until he had bespattered the fresh paint with In the dusky autumn evenings he gave runaway rings at the pear-shaped gate bell-pulls. He did the same in winter, too, and when the poor shivering little housemaid, who had to leave the warm kitchen fire and trip down the long, cold gravel path, peeped out of the gate, and was looking about half-frightened. bang came a snowball on her cheek from Master Ephraim, who was hiding round the corner. tied cord across the village street in the evening, to trip people up. He even had the impudence, one



'Gathering snails by the half-gallon, to empty into the old ladied gardena:-CHILD'S CORNER BOOK, p. 174-



very dark evening, to tie a string to the parsonage knocker, and he kept it going for nearly an hour; once giving such a rat-a-tat-tat right over the heads of the servants, who were standing in the porch on the look-out for the supposed runaway, that the housemaid went into hysterics, the fat cook fainted off as dead as a stone on the doorsteps, and the man-servant rushed into the vicar's study with a face as white as a sheet, and had to drop into a chair, and clutch another by the back, before he could gasp out, 'Oh, sir, if you please, the front-door knocker's bewitched, sir.'

All the mischief that Ephraim did not do at home or at school he tried to do upon the sly-only telling Keren-happuch of the spiciest of his exploits. But, of course, he was found out now and then, and at last every bit of mischief that was done in or near Sloefield was put down to little Ephraim.

'That boy ain't born to be drownded,' the village people used to say. 'You mark my word—he'll come to the gallers as sure as his name's Ephraim. A professin' man like Master Bines ought to be ashamed of hisself to let 'un have his own way as he do. Bines is none so easy with his gals.'

All this greatly scandalised old Ephraim, who was a leading man at the little Sloefield chapel. He lectured, he thrashed young Ephraim more vigorously than ever; but all without avail.

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william, Canterbury bells, pinks, picotees, carnations, polyanthuses, columbine, monk's-hood, flags, jonguils, daffodils, periwinkle, crocuses, snowdrops, double daisies, roses of all hues, lilies of the valley, white lilies, tawny tiger-lilies, peonies, dahlias, marigolds, lavender, ribes and honeysuckle, and nasturtiums and convolvuluses, that festooned the trees with blossomspangled clusters, and claret and sulphur and rosepink-bloomed hollyhocks that nearly overtopped the trees. The paths, as well as the flower-beds, were very narrow, but not a weed was to be seen in them. His garden was the only thing on earth that seemed to give old Ephraim unmixed satisfaction. When he had to join in singing at the chapel-

> ' No foot of land do I possess. No cottage in this wilderness. A poor wayfaring man,'

Ephraim always drew himself up, as if to intimate that he was singing under protest; that in his case, at any rate, the hymn was mere poetry.

Of course, young Ephraim had long helped himself to forbidden fruit in his father's garden, but for long also he graciously refrained from doing any wanton mischief in it. After a certain flogging, however, he got two moles and turned them loose in the garden. They burrowed into the soil almost as if they were diving in water, and in a week's time the trim beds and paths were pimpled everywhere with little mounds of earth. Poor old Ephraim was almost beside himself, but at last he managed to trap the moles, and hung them on one of his lilac-trees. He raked the molehills smooth, readjusted the plants which they had disturbed, and once more pottered about in his garden, before he went out to work, and when he came home from work, with great complacency.

His graceless little son, however, had another cross in store for him.

Old Ephraim had a dozen dahlias of which he was very proud; the blooms were so regular and bright and velvety. He wanted to keep them in blossom during the winter, so he potted the tubers in autumn and put them into his little greenhouse. Next afternoon Jemima saw Ephraim poking what she thought were potatoes into the fire, and Keren-happuch looking on in high glee. 'Where did you get those potatoes, you bad boy !' asked Jemima.

'They ain't potatoes, Crossy,' answered Ephraim.
'I wanted to see how baked dahlia-roots would taste. Won't father be in a rage? They 're his prime 'uns.' And as he spoke, the shameless young varlet brandished the trowel with which he had scooped up the tubers.

At the risk of having her shins kicked, Jemima could not help boxing Ephraim's ears and bundling him out of doors. As she did so, up came old Ephraim, who had got away from work earlier than

usual, bringing with him a saucer for one of his dahliapots that was in want of it. Jemima soon told her tale, little Ephraim standing by in dogged silence, with his head down, and his hand up to his chin, just as his father had his. The thrashing old Ephraim gave young Ephraim was so terrific that Kezia screamed, and, timid though she was, she rushed in between her father and her brother. Her father shook her off, and went on with the flogging. Then he marched little Ephraim to the shed, and locked him in without food for the night. Old Ephraim little thought that any of his daughters-least of all timid Kezia-would presume to solace the young rebel. But when the old man and her sisters went to bed, Kezia made some excuse for staying up a few minutes. She had saved her sop from supper, and got a couple of blankets off her own bed. She took down the key of the shed from the dresser-hook on which it hung, and started for the shed with her supplies. Sore, scared little Ephraim, sobbing in the dark and cold, was greatly cheered by the bedclothes and the bread and milk. Kezia staved with him as long as she could—then tucked him in, and locked him up once more.

Old Ephraim was very wrathful when he went to the shed in the morning, and found the young criminal comfortably rolled up and snoring in the blankets. But Kezia was too ill then to be scolded. The night before had been frosty—the first autumn frost—and Kezia had run out without putting anything on, and then had come back to a blanketless bed. For days her life was despaired of; for weeks, for months, for a year and a half, she was confined to her bed. I do not say that during that long time little Ephraim never did any mischief, but he was an altered boy, and would sit for hours in his sister's bedroom, watching her like a dog. I do not say that he never did any mischief when Kezia got about again; but it was only a very little more than the amount that is natural even in good boys—good boys outside book-covers. His sister's love for him and his love for his sister did him more good than all his father's lickings.





THE BUNYIP.



ES, there's plenty o' duck down yonder in the flat, if you can on'y hit 'em; but if you don't do no more murder than you did t'other night with the 'possums, I don't see as it's much good my takin' on ye,' said Steve the Poacher to me. 'Why, a suckin' babe might ha' tumbled 'em

over by the score that night—they was so plain in the moonlight; and there was you a-blazin' away, an' not never bringin' down nothin'.'

Steve the Poacher was the sportsman of the station, a wiry old man who had been 'sent out' to Australia a good many years ago for some offence he had committed in the pursuit of his English profession, and I was a 'new chum' whom Steve, when his day's work was over, was graciously willing to try to reconcile to the land of our adoption (involuntary adoption on Steve's part) because I chanced to come from Steve's own county.

Steve had been no unfair satirist of my style of sport, but if I couldn't shoot, he could; and it was better fun wandering about with the old man at night than moping in my hut, listening to the morepoke. Accordingly that night, when Steve's sheep had been counted in, and he had taken his evening meal of milkless tea, mutton chops and damper, he and I started for our duck-shooting.

It was a glorious night. Brilliantly as the stars shine in Australia, they were dimmed by the full splendour of the magnificent moon. The only clouds in the pearl-grey sky were a few curly little wisps like locks of fresh-washed wool.

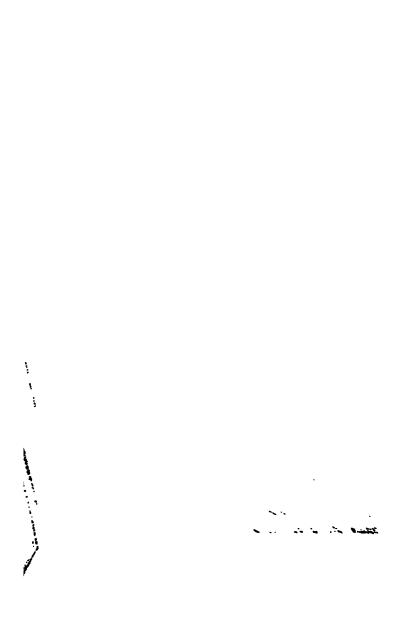
We passed some store-cattle sleeping, chewing the cud, and a few still browsing on the moonlit grass, and then we came upon a mob of kangaroo grazing with their forelegs tucked under them like mountain sheep. Off they went with a rush when they heard us—dap—dap—in their ludicrous 'for I have got the nerves' fashion. One white 'old man' looked like a lunatic taking a moonlight dance in his night-shirt. At the feet of the moon-silvered gum-trees opossums were scuttering about, scampering up when disturbed like men-of-war's men ordered to 'lay aloft.' Flying foxes came floating down like fallen cherubim. Little native cats, dappled like toyshop wooden horses, were out upon the prowl. In the tea-tree-scrub round the water for which we were bound, a

bittern was booming like a melancholy prophet predicting desolation and great woe. Quail were cooing in the fern; as we passed through a patch of it we flushed a brace. We disturbed a crake too in his slumbers in the rushes, lower down, and away he flustered with a startled cheep—cheep—cheep, and a croaking nankeen crane floundered up from the scrub as we entered it. We made our way to the water by a cattle-path, and crouching down in the reeds and rushes looked out for our game. We could hear black swans talking secrets not far off, but at first could see no ducks.

The bittern had ceased its dreary boom, but to make up for that, a phalanx of frogs were croaking in full chorus. Suddenly they all shut up at once. A flock of black ducks were splashing and quacking in the water, and presently they swam up within tempting range. Bang—bang—bang—bang. It was impossible even for me to fail to hit under such circumstances, and Steve's one-eared dog, Snap, was soon bringing birds to shore in grand style. The unwounded ones meantime had risen simultaneously, and the breaking-out of the frogs' chorus showed that they had taken a long flight.

'Guess we've skeared 'em,' said Steve, 'but here's about enough for one while; so let's pick 'em up and be movin'. I've got to be up by sunrise.'

As we walked home we heard a distant boom.



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Steve started.

- 'Did you hear that?' he asked. 'Do you know what that is?'
 - 'Why, a bittern, isn't it?' I said.
 - 'No,' he answered, emphatically.
- 'That afore was a bittern, but this is—the Bunyip.'

 He dropped his voice into a solemn whisper as he
 uttered the name of the dread beast.

'You wouldn't ha' ketched me goin' into the swamp to-night if I'd ha' known he'd been so nigh. I've seed him twice, and he don't never let a man blow he's seed him three times. I'm afeared he's come arter me. I never heared of his bein' so far down as this—not for a long while. It was a big bit farther up the country than this that I seen him last.'

Now, I had heard before of the Bunyip—the bête noire of the Australian bush; but I had never before met with any one who even pretended to look upon it as anything else than a myth—about as real an animal as the unicorn in the Royal Arms. I strongly suspected that, as old hands are very fond of doing, Steve was trying to 'take a rise' out of the new chum.

He kept his countenance perfectly, however, when, in reply to my inquiry as to what the Bunyip was like, he answered—

'Why, a kind o' cross between a poley bullock and a lion, as big as a coaching stallion, and possess-ed with the devil, if he bain't the old un hisself. He's got hoofs and a tail and teeth just like, and he's always a-goin' about seekin' whom he may dewour, on'y then he's got no harns. Fust time I seen him was down in Illawarra. I was out snipe-shootin'. The snipe here ain't like them at home, you can find 'em on dry land as well as wet. Well, I was pokin' about in the brake for a bird I'd killed, when I seen a footmark in the sand such as I never seen afore. It was summut like a bullock's, but then it was too big, and besides, it worn't like a bullock's, not exackly. There was a lot on 'em, and I ran the tracks down to some cedar brush, and there was the Bunyip a-layin' under a giant-nettle. He seen me an' come at me. gnashin' his teeth, and his eyes a-rollin' like red-hot coals. I let fly at him, but it ain't easy to kill the devil with snipe-shot. If I hadn't been a deal smarter on my pins then than I am now, and he hadn't tangled hisself, too, in the bush-ropes, he'd ha' had me, sure as fate. Last time I seen him was on Darling Downs. He give chase, and he got his teeth into the off hindleg of my old horse—I was a stockman then. The horse give a start and got free, but the Bunyip was soon up to him again, and if I hadn't jumped off, on to a colt as had been skeared from his grass, and was dashin' by like mad, and ridden him home bare-back -precious tight I had to hold on to the mane—the Bunyip would ha' had me as well as my old horse. Wanderer was his name—he was a sorrel with a white star and two white stockings. It's my belief that the on'y thing to do is to cut and run when the Bunyip's arter ye. I've heared of them as has fired at him with ball, and the bullets rattled off like hail on shingles. Swamps he's mostly fond o' hidin' in. He was hidin' in some tea-tree scrub just a mile and a furlong from a township I was livin' in up at Moreton Bay-Queensland they calls it now-and every night, soon as ever the clock struck twelve, the Bunyip began to bellow, so as nobody could sleep. Some said it was a bittern boomin', but, law bless ye, anybody as knows can easy tell the diff'rence between a bittern and the Bunyip. And some said it was an airthquake blowin' off steam, which was more like; but still I knew it worn't true, because, ye see, I'd heared the Bunyip bellow afore. But some o' the chaps as thought 'emselves gamer than them as could ha' eaten 'em, got their guns and went out to the swamp one night. My word! The Bunyip jest give one roar, and back they rushed as pale as turmets and jumped into their beds, where they all died, in from within fifteen to five months and three weeks, of pulpitation o' the heart. You may talk about bitterns, because ye don't know no better, but it'd skear ye, I can tell ye, to hear the Bunyip roar close by. Still, I do think it's wuss to come upon him unawares—oh, my—! there he is!'

Steve stood for a second staggering and shivering with well-simulated terror, and then was off like a shot.

The biter was bit, however. He caught his foot in a log, threw an involuntary somersault, and rolled down, with a sousing splash, into a waterhole.

He looked very sheepish when I helped him out. 'I meant to have made 'em all tease the life out o' you, young man, with their chaff, but now I s'pose the tables is turned. Tell ye what it is—I'll say you shot all the ducks—and give 'em to ye, too, if you want 'em—if ye won't say nothing about this.'





'THE SUN IN THE SANDS.'

BOY left at school during the holidays—especially the Christmas holidays—is a subject on which a story-teller lavishes his sombrest tints, and yet one of the jolliest Christmases I ever spent was spent under those circumstances. There were three fellows left besides myself—Dick,

Tom, and Harry, I will call them. One of the ushers remained in nominal charge of us, but 'Blind Bobus,' even in school-time, was a very harmless dragon, and during the holidays, so long as we did not bother him, he never bothered us. We got up when we liked, went to bed when we liked, had our meals when we liked—for the servants, in consideration of our supposed desolate position, and complaisant connivance at the frequent entertainments to which their friends were invited, not always below stairs, humoured us to our hearts' content. The cook, who was left in trust of

our commissariat, put a liberal interpretation upon her instructions, and I believe we got more 'good things' than we should have got at home—to say nothing of the delightfully gipsy fashion in which we took our 'regular meals,' and the second supper, or first breakfast, of coffee and buttered toast, or hot elder wine and seedcake, brought up into our bedroom when the kitchen guests were departing in the small hours. We were asked out to more parties than would have fallen to our lot at home, for the day-boys' friends also took pity on us, and were for ever sending us invitations.

There were other, and even more potent causes than those I have mentioned, for our enjoyment of Christmas at school; but before I can indicate these, I must do a little bit of topography and mythology. The house next to the school-house had been 'in Chancery' as long as the oldest inhabitants of the neighbourhood could remember, and had been called 'The Sun in the Sands,' for a reason to be given presently. It was a tall pile of freestone, which immemorial neglect of all kinds had mottled with moist. unwholesome blotches, like plague spots. The pots of the long-smokeless chimneys were cracked, chipped, shattered, or wanting. Coarse grass and rank weeds waved drearily in the ridges of the green-furred tiles. Here and there a wallflower sprang from mossy, crumbling mortar; putting forth in its season blossoms.

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whose fragrance floated too far up to give any softness to the scene. Wherever a window was shutterless, or unshuttered, every pane had been so often smashed that scarce the merest fringe of jagged, dirty lash remained around the eyeless sockets of the frames. All iron-work about the place was caked and carious with rust: all outside woodwork was sun-blistered and rain-sodden. Most of the spear-heads had been knocked off the rusty palisades of the forecourt; only enough remained to keep out trespassers. The front doors and windows on the ground floor and basement were also as secure as anything in such a ramshackle place could be. But, as we boys knew well, it was easily enterable from the rear. We had got up clandestine exploring expeditions, provided ourselves with fat little coils of green wax tapers, and poked about in all the dark corners. Even by day, however, the basement was an eerie dungeon to go down into. Damp gloom brooded everywhere. The wide rusty kitchen-range, that had not cooked a Christmas dinner for a couple of generations at least, was choked with broken bricks and dusty mortar. rooms above were scarcely more cheerful. The sunbeams that stole through the shutter-holes pencilled pale sloping lines of restlessly revolving motes upon the dusty dusk, and dimly showed lath and plaster drooping from the ceiling; floors with holes in them like hatchways; and carved marble mantelpieces.

clammily cold, yellow, and darkly discoloured. To get up-stairs it was necessary to proceed per saltum. Some flights had lost their top steps, some their bottom; others had black gulfs in the middle. There was as much pleasure in venturing on them as in trying ice certain not to bear a couple of feet farther on. And, as was to be expected of such a place, the house had its ghost.

The haunted room, according to the current legend, was one of the top bedrooms, just beneath the attics. It had a door giving on the front staircase, and once could be entered from the back staircase also (just where it turned a corner to curve up into the attics), through a double-doored closet, or dark dressing-room. These two closet doors were fast shut in our time. We rattled their handles sometimes, but. in spite of the Sadduceeism which we affected by day, it was with a timorously feeble hand. We felt relieved when they did not open. They were the special property of old Oliver's ghost-these, and some brown, broad freckles on the bedroom floor, -- blood drops, of course, which no amount of planing or scrubbing could remove. We talked about trying the experiment, but somehow we never did.

Once upon a time—the most definite date I ever ascertained—No. 2 was tenanted by a rich old man of the name of Oliver, who had made his fortune in ways not over-scrupulous in the West Indies. When

his fortune was made, the old man moved inland into Somersetshire, and set up for a fine gentleman. At any rate, he wanted his son to be one. This son was the last of six. The other five had either died suddenly at sea, or withered away mysteriously on shore. The old man's wife and daughters were dead. had not a single near relative left except this youngest He hoped that his money, however gotten, would win a well-born bride for his boy; and therefore had bought what was then a fashionable house in the suburbs of what was then a fashionable city; to which new house satirically envious neighbours who had found out his history, gave the name of the old hostel in the west which he had once kept, 'The Sun in the Sands.' But young Oliver had secretly married a low-born Cornish lass. She was left behind when he removed to Bath, and, although he supplied her with money, she grew anxious about her own rights. On the first Christmas-eve the Olivers spent in their fine new house, the young Cornish woman gave a faint tug at the ponderous pear-shaped bell-The servant who went to the door chanced to be one of the Cornish household, young Oliver's nurse, who had been retained when all its other members were dismissed. She pitied her countywoman, smuggled her up to the top bedroom, and brought her husband to her. On Christmas night, when the lower floors were full of light and frolic, the

babe was born in that dim chamber. The old nurse looked after the mother and the child; young Oliver looked in upon them as often as he durst; all the servants kept his secret except one. On Old Christmas night, when the old man was hot with wine, she told him the whole story, and led him up the back stairs to surprise the couple. He slipped into the dark closet by the outer door, and listened to their talk. The young man was scheming with the nurse for the removal of his wife and infant to some securer retirement, and the pair were picturing to themselves the happy time they would spend when the old man was gone. This cool calculation on his death made the drunken old wretch flame out in fiendish fury. 'That beggar's brat have my money!' he howled, as he kicked open the inner door. And, as he spoke, he snatched the baby from its mother's breast, and dashed its little brains out on the sharp edge of the fender. Still clutching the blood-sprinkled draperv. he rushed down the back stairs. The spy who had brought him there was gone; all the servants except the nurse were in the kitchen; there was no one to stop him: when his son at last overtook him he had just dropped his burden into the deep well in the carriage-yard. The mother had fainted, and when she was brought-to she began to babble the wild talk of fever. The next night but one, when the nurse awoke with a start from a ten minutes' nap into which she had been betrayed, she saw that her patient's bed was empty. She roused the husband; they found that the garden-door was open; and, getting a lantern, traced bare footmarks on the snow to the side of the fishpond. Its thin crust of just formed ice was starred like a broken pane of glass, and, when at last they got the poor creature out, there was no fever in her brains, for she was a key-cold corpse.

Those were not days of penny papers. She was buried. The dark closet and the bedroom were fast locked and bolted, and the matter was hushed up. The son and the nurse were the only ones who could have explained the mystery: it was not the son's interest to get his father's property forfeited as a felon's, and he found means to secure the nurse's silence. He did not live to inherit the father's ill-gotten gains, however, but withered away like his brothers. When the old man died intestate, a very numerous band of distant relatives claimed kindred with him, but they were so very distant that both law and equity had to be appealed to to decide between their claims, which they had not succeeded in doing down to my time. The nurse made her weird confession on her deathbed, and then the bedroom was broken into, and the ineffaceable stains traced on the floor. For some reason or other the closet was left locked, and a mythus was formed, to the effect that, every Twelfth Night, the man who had profaned Christmas by murder, was brought to this closet from the place of doom in the charge of special tormentors, and that so, year after year, he would have to stand gazing through the keyhole on the scene of his crime, unless he saw on Twelfth Night some one as bad as himself do a kindness there.

Tom, Dick, Harry, and I, as has been said, being children of the enlightened nineteenth century, in receipt not only of a classical education, but also of weekly lectures on the natural and experimental sciences, professed to pooh-pooh the wild story by day; and yet even by day, especially at Christmas time, it lent a somewhat flesh-creeping interest to 'The Sun in the Sands.' And the well certainly looked dark enough to be the sepulchre of a murdered Its black mouth yawned in the centre of the silent, grass-grown carriage-yard. The wooden cover had vanished long ago. The winch-handle had gone. The props were as shaky as an old man's legs. water glimmered up like a wicked eye in another world. The garden, too, most persons would have thought a very melancholy pleasance. The boxborders had either shrivelled into sticks or run up into bushes. The beds were jumbles of grass, weeds, straggling shrubs, and unpruned trees, in which the few flowers that forced their way through in June, looked like the despairingly upturned faces of the drowning. The garden seats had dropped to pieces.

On a ragged lawn stood a grey-pillared sun-dial, with a twisted gnomon, telling vanished hours, like a wicked old man musing on his mis-spent youth. In the middle of the garden stagnated the pond in which the young Cornishwoman was said to have drowned herself. It surrounded a little ait, smothered in nightshade, and haunted by a patriarchal water-rat that looked as wearily wicked as the wandering Tew. Nevertheless, the garden of 'The Sun in the Sands' was our favourite lounge. It ran parallel to the garden of No. 3, and by means of the garden-roller behind their arbour, two of the occupants of No. 3 could mount the garden-wall unseen, and thence be politely handed down into what then became a Paradise—a somewhat chilly Eden, it is true, but still conveniently screened from eyeshot.

The occupant of No. 3 was an ill-tempered old Anglo-Indian, whom I will call Mr. Chutney. The whole school loathed him to a boy, and he was not a greater favourite with the masters. He was always sending in complaints of the 'noise we made,' or some equal enormity of which we had been guilty. He watched us at church as the beadle watched the charity boys; in the playground he kept us under active espionage from behind the curtains of his first-floor back-windows; and never wearied in trumping up charges against us. If we were unlucky enough to the contract of his premises,

we might count it a 'lost ball' in the most literal sense.

The fact that he was blessed—cursed, he considered it—with two pretty wards, with whom, in spite of his precautions, we were on terms of cordial amity, did not in the slightest degree soften our hearts towards him. The rigour with which we heard that he dared to treat even them made our blood boil the more. Polly and Letty Chutney were two exceedingly pretty girls, the daughters of an officer on service in India, and sent home to be educated under their grandparents' eye. At first they had masters and mistresses at No. 3, and the whole school was head-over-ears in love with the lovely girls. We met at church; we met sometimes 'out of bounds' on week-days; we had rare, sweet interviews over the garden-wall; we devised a system of signals, which enabled playground and second-floor schoolroom to converse beneath, or rather across, the detective's very nose. Emboldened by impunity, we waxed careless. Our code was noticed, scrutinised, and partially interpreted, and cruel vengeance was taken. When we came back to school at the beginning of the previous half, we had felt inclined to assassinate old Chutney, as he stood peeping between the curtains, grinning maliciously at the disappointed glances we could not help casting up at the second-floor windows. Polly and Letty had been banished across the valley to a boarding-

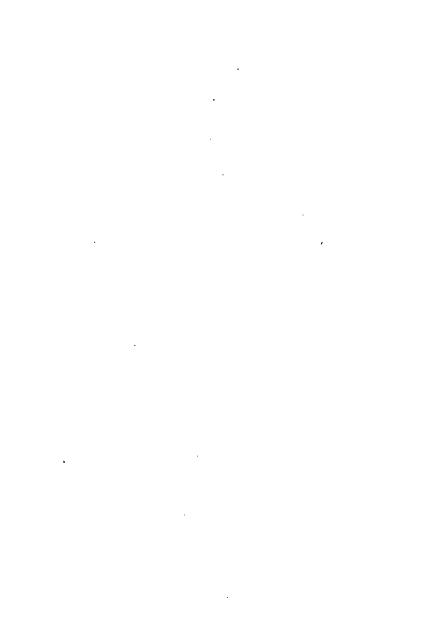
school somewhere on Lansdown. Our code could not carry so far. One or two of us, when we could get leave long enough for such a walk, set forth on Blondel expeditions; diving into Bath's basin, ascending the white dusty roads on the other side, and stopping to whistle before every ladies' school we came to there. But in vain. Our only hope then was that they might come home at Michaelmas, when we had a week's holiday, though very few of us left school. But Michaelmas came, and Michaelmas went, and still no Polly or Letty. They did not break up so soon as we did, and, therefore, most of our fellows had to depart at Christmas uncheered by even a glimpse of their Adored. Dick, Tom, etc., had at first been greatly pitied, when it was known that they must spend their Christmas at school; but, at the thought of Polly and Letty, we became objects of envious congratulation. They must come home at Christmas, and we should have no end of chances of foregathering with them. They did come home. The detective had gone off guard, and at first we did pretty much as we liked. But he soon discovered that there were 'some of those young nuisances left, and he once more peeped between the curtains. sent in notes to Blind Bobus, complaining of the liberty which he allowed us; but Bobus plucked up spirit to disregard these missives, more especially since he knew that, if he attempted to act upon

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them, he would have to exchange the sluggish calm of his Christmas vacation (enlivened by Rousseau's Dream, in which long practice had not made him perfect; and daily more hopeless questioning of squared x's and y's) for far hotter water than he had ever experienced in the crowded half. Old Chutney was obliged to content himself with ordering his wards into the front-rooms, whilst at home, and compelling them, as he thought, to take their out-door exercise in the garden, when not walking or driving out under his own surveillance.

Polly and Letty, and Dick, Tom, etc., still met at pleasure in the garden of 'The Sun in the Sands,' and jolly times we had there. We even got up banquets in the haunted house. Cook was in our confidence, and did not permit our reputations as generous hosts to suffer. They were somewhat shivery picnics, and whilst the rest feasted, we had to appoint a sentinel like the rooks; but plum-pudding eaten in secret was pleasant, and stolen ginger-wine proved sweet. We had to dodge a little to get into the house, but, once in—if we did not laugh too loud, or stay too long—we could roam about with the girls ad libitum. The story of old Oliver's annual vigil had taken their fancy; they doubted our Sadduceeism, and dared us to accompany them to the haunted room on Twelfth Night.

Of course, such a challenge was not to be refused; but at first it seemed improbable that our fair challengers would be able to get out to test our valour. Propitious circumstances, however, removed all obstacles to the nocturnal expedition. We had been invited out by the day-boys to half-a-dozen Twelfth Night parties, but all these we had magnanimously declined. What were day-boys' insipid sisters in comparison with Polly and Letty? As to surveillance, even the perfunctory vigilance which at any time was exercised over us was altogether relaxed on that Twelfth Night. Cook was about to give the grandest entertainment even of her brilliant season's series that evening. She had constructed a mountainous Twelfth cake; the baker's man, who was her admirer, and one of the invited guests, had iced it for her as a token of love; and she had begged the loan of the parlour for her drawing-room. We consented to vacate our quarters readily enough, more particularly since we were promised that, when the cake was cut, handsome sections of the saccharine Mont Blanc should be put by for our next picnic. Accordingly, about five P.M., cook, arrayed in a cast-off moiré antique of her mistress's ('merry-antic' the second wearer called it), sailed into the schoolroom with our tea-tray, followed by a housemaid bearing our supper, covered up upon another. When they had taken their departure, we were safe from servants' inspection until the afore-mentioned 'second supper' should make its appearance in our bedroom next morning. Shortly





'Old Leading Features,—an eccentric old bachelor, who breakfasted on cured badger, and slept in his clothes.'—CHILD'S CORNER BOOK, p. 201.

after tea, moreover, Bobus departed to enjoy his solitary and singular piece of Christmas dissipation. Our scientific lecturer-better known as 'Old Leading Features,' from his unvarying exordium, 'and now, gentlemen, let us briefly recapitulate the leading features of our last week's lecture'-an eccentric old bachelor, who breakfasted on cured badger, and slept in his clothes, curled up in a blanket in a corner of his laboratory, had still further manifested his eccentricity by announcing that he was about to deliver in the Lower Rooms, on Twelfth Night, a 'popular lecture' on 'The Chemical and Physical Properties of Selenium.' He had been kind enough to send us tickets for this lively entertainment. The joke was rather too rich; nevertheless, we had declined them with most respectful thanks. But to poor Bobus the lecture was a godsend. He jumped at his ticket, and, together with the doorkeeper and the lad who handed the lecturer his bottles, must have constituted the overwhelming majority of 'Old Leading Features' popular audience at the Literary and Scientific Institution on Twelfth Night.

As may be supposed, a churlish old fellow like old Chutney cared little for Christmas festivities, but on this night, we had heard from Polly and Letty, that grandpapa and grandmamma had been prevailed upon 'just to look in' at a ball given by another old Indian in Pulteney Street. They were to start at ten,

when the girls would be supposed to be fast asleep. When the old folks had fairly gone, a little manœuvring would easily enable Polly and Letty to join us. We kept a sharp look-out. A little after ten the yellow chariot lumbered up to the fore-court gate, but it was not till nearly a quarter to eleven that it got under way. As soon as the rumble of its wheels began to sound a little fainter on the frosty hill, we rushed to our trysting-place. But we had to wait so long that we could not help feeling that Polly and Letty had proved faithless. Their domestic difficulties had proved greater than they had anticipated, and it was nearly twelve before we heard a stealthy tread on the other side of the garden wall, and the frozen snow rattling off the crisp laurustinuses. A moment more. and two columns of white breath rose from the sweet lips of the two pretty fur-ruffed faces—pretty even in the indistinct starlight, that peeped above the rising masonry. They were soon in old Oliver's garden. Just as we entered the haunted house, the toll of twelve from the Abbey church clock boomed up from the valley. As we toiled up the trembling stairs, the back-door by which we had entered banged behind us, and its thunder rolled through the empty house in rumbling echoes that were not courage-prompting. Numerous party though we were, both challengers and challenged wished themselves safe in bed when we reached the haunted chamber, for, after a minute's

breathless, heart-thumping listening, there could be no mistake about the matter, there was something stirring in the attics overhead; a tread as stealthy as a cat's, but too heavy for that. To add to our horror, a few minutes afterwards we heard steps coming up both the front stairs and the back. The tread above was exchanged for a noise, as of something scrambling, or being pushed through the rotten roof. Nearer and nearer sounded the creakings on the stairs. The mystery of the front staircase was fortunately soon explained. Old Leading Features and Blind Bobus entered, both in a state of most unscientific hilarity, and the former bearing our big hall lamp, which he had wrenched off its chain. The lecturer had invited the usher home to supper; both had found his Schiedam more enlivening than his Selenium: and its effect on the usher's unseasoned brain had been so very marked that Old Leading Features had insisted on escorting Blind Bobus home. Bobus had got some inkling of our intended adventure, and when he could not find his charges either in the schoolroom or in the house, a fear of responsibility, Dutch courage, and the presence of his scientific friend, combined to drive him into a vigorous display of authority. He informed the professor that he must go and bring us home. The professor had volunteered to share his further search, and snatching down the lamp of the hall, led the way.

The back-stair mystery was also soon explained. Old Chutney had not been at the ball after all. horses had not been roughed, and one of them had fallen before he got to his friend's, and broken both knees. He had come home in a worse temper even than that in which he had set out, and it was not improved when he found that his grand-daughters were not in bed. Their maid, terrified by his fury, had confessed that they had gone into the garden, and was bidden to pack up her boxes instanter. Snatching up a lantern, as he rushed through the stableyard, he had managed somehow to track us to 'The Sun in the Sands,' but, ignorant of the locality, had stumbled up the back-stairs. Whilst we were wondering why he had come home so soon, and how he could have found us out, the scrambling sound in the roof was heard once more; there was a scutter of feet upon the attic floor, a heavy rush down the attic stairs, a thud of blows, a crunching crush of tin and horn, and then old Chutney was howling 'Murder' in the dark. Hastily handing his light to one of the pale girls, and shouting a general 'Come on, boys!' the professor rushed at the inner closet door. was a brawny old fellow, and went through both doors like a rhinoceros through reeds. Pot-valiant Bobus darted after him. In the presence of our mistresses, who had disputed our courage, there was nothing for us to do but to follow, whilst they ran to

the window, echoing their grandpapa's cry. Then came a rough-and-tumble fight on the stair-head; but we always flattered ourselves that we should have mastered the four big burglars, even if the servants on both sides had not been alarmed. It was with great relief, however, that we saw the coachman and the footman from No. 3, and our man-of-all-work, and the baker's man, and a policeman, rush up the stairs with lights and staves. The robbers were soon secured. They had got into old Oliver's garden from the meadows beyond, and so into the house, intending to crawl over the roof, and find or force an entrance into old Chutney's; but hearing noises, they had fancied themselves surprised, and had hastened back—to be captured.

Whilst a messenger was hurrying to find fresh members of the force to convey them to the station-house, old Oliver's ghost (if it was there) must have received, according to the legend, the commutation of its sentence. Old Chutney did, what he thought, a kindness, in the haunted chamber. As he sat on the floor, leaning against the broken door of the dark closet, panting and puffing (whilst Polly and Letty dabbed his bleeding forehead with their pocket-hand-kerchiefs), he gasped out, 'Infamous neglect—atrocious conduct—but gentlemen—boys—girls—servants—and constable—since—perhaps—you've saved—my life—and my—property—I'll overlook—you about

inable—behaviour!' He was better than that, however. He gave Bobus a gold watch, and supplied Old Leading Features with means to construct a longcoveted electro-magnetic battery, strong enough to knock down a dozen burglars. He pretended thenceforth not to notice our flirtations with his granddaughters, and even twice invited us to spend an evening openly with them-merely pishaing when we availed ourselves of mistletoe privileges. His manner became less cordial when the other fellows came back, and with them, although he had ceased to be an aggressor, he always continued on mere terms of very uncomfortable armed peace. But what did that matter? The girls were once more at home. Old Chutney was dissatisfied with their school, and masters and mistresses again found their way to No. 3, with their portfolios and music-rolls. Polly and Letty always maintained that it was we who had knocked down the robbers, and, of course, we did not discredit this assertion. It won us so much favour with its inventors, that the other fellows often waxed frantically jealous. That-and, after all, it was not so much, since we were proud to be so envied—is the only drawback I can remember from the jollity of our Christmas at School.



PEGGY'S AFTERNOON NAP.



was a blazing afternoon in summer when little Peggy Bevan staggered down the shaggy mountain-side, with a great creel piled high with fresh-cut grass upon her back. She had thought that she would never be able to toil up Cefn Madoc—the sun beat down so, and the creel pulled back

so, and the brown grass and the grey stones of the hillside were both so slippery; and now she began to think that she could never reach the valley beneath unless she rolled down into it. There was not wind enough even to wave the pale-blue harebells. Lizards basked on the hot, hoary boulders. The black-faced little mountain-sheep lay panting in hollows that gave them the merest fringe of shade. The black mountain ponies impatiently whisked off the plaguing flies with their long rusty, ragged, bur-buttoned tails. Not a single bird was singing anywhere around. Now and

then a rabbit slipped out of the patches of fern and furze, or flung up its heels, as if it were taking a header, as it plunged into them again; but these were exceptionally restless rabbits. The vast majority of their more sensible comrades were napping in the coolest corners of their burrows, postponing frolic until the dew had begun to fall. All the country seemed asleep in the sunshine—the brown hills, the tiny green 'parks,' the goldening corn-patches, the clumps of dusky trees, the tumble-down straggling limestone walls, the dogrose-wreathed limekilns, the sloping stony bed of the dried-up river, the mossy mottled bridge that spanned it like a V turned upside down, the mouldering village churches nodding over their coffin-shaped flower-beds, the crumbling ivy-clad remnants of the three old ruined castles, the box-like little meeting-houses, the thatched white-washed little cottages and farmhouses with no gates to their farm-Everything looked asleep, except far-off vards. where the coal-pits raised their tall chimneys and gibbeted wheels, and blotched the country-side with boils of black rubbish; and, under the thicker smoke beyond, where the dingy town huddled at the bottom of the long, bright-blue, sail-dotted bay. But the pits and the town were so far off that they only made Cefn Madoc seem all the drowsier to little Peggy Bevan. The very railway at the bottom of the mountain had nothing bustling in it. The rails shone like gold in

the sunshine, little blue butterflies were fluttering dreamily over them, and a row of sleepy sparrows stood on one of the up rails as if they were roosting. Peggy meant to ask for a drink at Evan Evans the pointsman's cottage; but when she got there, she found that no one was at home except Evan, and he was lying asleep in his shirt-sleeves, with a halfsmoked pipe in his mouth, in the shade of a little grove of hollyhocks that rested their heavy, claretcoloured blossoms on the thatch of the cottage as if they wanted to go to sleep too. So on poor thirsty little Peggy had to trudge with her creel of grass behind her, waddling like a crab covered with shells and sea-weed. The proper crossing was a bridge over the points about a hundred yards from the pointsman's cottage, but Peggy was so tired with her long walk (and she had still to climb up a good bit of the mountain on the other side of the railway before she got home) that she determined to take the shortest cut. There was a gap in the railway fence just at the bottom of Evan's garden, and through that she pushed her wearying load. This was why she was carrying it:-Her grandmother's cow, Spot, was ill; and as Peggy had no brothers or sisters, no father or mother -only a grandmother, who was not quite as kind to the little girl as she might have been-Spot was Peggy's bosom friend. She herded Spot on the hillside, and chopped up her furze and potatoes for her, and put her arms round Spot's neck and cuddled her and talked to her in the dark little cow-house that joined on to the cottage. As soon as she was allowed to milk Spot, Peggy thought that she would be perfectly happy. Spot's sweet breath seemed sweeter than violets to Peggy, and there was a white star on Spot's fawn-coloured face which Peggy used to kiss in a way that seemed highly ridiculous to the crabbed old grandmother.

But now poor Spot was ill. She would not touch the coarse mountain-grass, and merely snuffed at the furze and potatoes. All day long she stood with her head hanging over the half-door of the cow-house, every now and then giving a melancholy little low. The grandmother, who looked very much like Mother Hubbard in her scarlet whittle and spectacles and tall black hat, had said a charm over Spot, but it had not done her a mite of good. The farrier had promised to come up from Llanrwst and have a look at her, but in the meantime poor Spot starved, and Peggy was in deep distress.

So on this broiling summer afternoon she had toiled to the grey cromlech on the other side of Cefn Madoc, to cut the rich grass which grew there round the Fairies' Well, thinking that it might tempt poor Spot to eat.

Anxious as she was to get back to her friend, however, Peggy, when she had pushed her load on to the

armed a section of the section of th

railway, and had scrambled through the gap herself, could not help stopping to enjoy the relief of lightened shoulders. She was almost dead-beat, poor little girl. The high piled grass was a tempting pillow. Down she sat for a minute, as she thought, on the rough ballasting, with her arm on the grass, which was cool in spite of the baking it had got, and her heavy little head on her aching little arm.

And then, suddenly, Peggy was back at the Fairies' Well, and Spot was there too, drinking the clear cold, shaded water, and wrenching up great mouthfuls of the juicy grass. But a spiteful little fairy climbed up to the top of the cromlech, and pelted Spot with hollyhocks; and the hollyhocks hurt, for they were hard as stones, and Spot began to low as if she did not like it. So Peggy tried to drive away the fairy, but he jumped on to her back, and clasped his hands round her neck so tight that she was nearly throttled. And then Peggy could not find Spot. The sheep and the ponies knew where she was, but they would not tell; and a grimy tip-girl came along, with buskins on and a red handkerchief tied round her head, and filled the creel with coals, and said that Peggy must carry it across the sea to Ireland. Peggy went into Llanrwst churchyard instead, only the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel, where Peggy went to Sunday-school, was in the churchyard and not the church; and then the chapel turned into Llanrwst Castle, and Granny was climbing up the ivy to catch Spot, who was stretching her head over the creel on the very top of the castle, trying to get out to eat the wallflowers. Granny had almost climbed to the top when the farrier gave a jump out of his pew, where he had been smoking his pipe in his shirt-sleeves, and tugged at Granny's petticoats. Granny pulled down the ivy, and that pulled down the castle. Peggy could see it coming, but she could not move, though she was lying right under it. And yet she did not feel afraid, because Spot was breathing in her face, and she was feeding Spot with hollyhocks. Granny gave an awful scream and down came the castle in a cloud of dust, and with a thud that shook the ground and thundered round the hills.

When Peggy awoke, her creel was knocked over, and her frock was out of gathers. Evan Evans, looking very white and angry, was swinging her by the petticoats like a sign of the Golden Fleece. His danger-flag lay between the rails, with the staff snapped in two. The up express was rattling over his points; the engine-driver and stoker craning over the tender, as they looked back with scared faces, and young Evan Evans was leaning on the switch. Most fortunately the pointsman's boy was with him when he saw Peggy lounging against the rail, just after he had sighted the express train shooting, half smothered in black and white clouds, out of the

Llanrwst tunnel. Waving his flag, he had rushed down the line to the rescue, and just saved Peggy. The off buffer of the engine nearly grazed him as he sprang across the metals, and swung Peggy out of danger. Evan was very much out of breath, and he was also very much out of temper; but for all that he was a kind-hearted religious man, and when he had recovered his breath and his temper, he said in Welsh, 'We ought both to thank God, my wench.' And he helped Peggy to put the grass back in her creel, and when he knew why she had gathered it, he called young Evan to help her to carry it up the hill.

Granny scolded Peggy sadly because of the torn frock, but Peggy was consoled when she saw how Spot enjoyed the Fairies' Well grass.

She could not help thinking, however, that it was rather hard that her friend should eat it so composedly, when it had so nearly cost her her life.





TOM'S FIRST TROUSERS.

OUSIN TOM was a great deal betterlooking than I was, when we were little fellows. But if he should read this, I can fancy him saying, 'Well, that's not much of a compliment, old fellow.' Tom was always rude to me when we were boys, and he is very much the same

when I meet him in the City now. My sister Mary was very fond of Tom, but he was rude to her too, because she was not pretty either. She was twenty times nicer a girl than ever he was a boy, though. I was very angry with Mary for being so fond of him. But I was a thousand times more angry when I saw how fond beautiful Cousin Ju was of good-looking Cousin Tom. I was just as much her cousin as he was, and the first moment I saw her at Uncle Walter's (where she had come to stay because her mamma was very ill), I made up my mind that I would marry

her. But, though she was only a year and a half older than I was, she treated me just as if I had been a baby. She was very kind, and used to stoop down and kiss me, exactly like mamma; but I didn't care about such kisses from Ju. Tom was only half a year older than I, but then he was a good bit taller,—half an inch taller than Ju; and so she seemed to think him quite a man. When he wanted to kiss her, if she knew that any one could see them, sometimes she wouldn't let him; but that did not comfort me.

Though Tom was so much taller than I was, I got the start of him in one thing. I was breeched before he was. Aunt was very proud of his mottled legs—I couldn't see why, they looked to me just like mottled soap-and dressed him up, as long as she could, in short socks and frilled drawers like a Merry-Andrew's. Tom did not like this style of dress, and, therefore (I suppose, I ought to be ashamed to say), I let him see me in my new trousers as speedily as possible. I was very proud of my trousers. I had been obliged to put up with a paltry kind of go-between for a few months previously-nankeen leggings stitched on to linen drawers; but at last I had got real rifle-green cloth trousers for week-days, and light-coloured ones for Sundays. I was delighted to see the impression which my first breeches produced both on Tom and Ju. Tom looked at me as if he did not know what to make of my impudence, and Ju cried, out, 'Oh, Dick, they do make you look such a big baby!'

About a week after this aunt sent mamma a note to say that next day Ju and Tom were going into the country, to spend the day with Molly Jenkins (the old woman who had nursed aunt when Tom was born), and that if Mary and I might have a holiday too, our cousins would be very glad of our company, and the phaeton should call for us and bring us back. Neither Mary nor I could quite believe that our cousins would be very glad of our company, but we were both delighted at the thought of spending a long bright day in the country with one or the other of them. leave to put on a pair of my Sunday trousers (which my cousins had not seen) in honour of the occasion. I was standing on the door-steps next day, admiring my trousers, when the phaeton drove up. Mary had hoped that she should ride with Tom, and I had hoped that I should ride with Ju; but they were both in the back seat, and there they kept. We were 'company,' they said, and it wouldn't be polite to let us sit behind. The one seat left beside the groom. perhaps, was bigger than the two seats behind; but I believe they put us there that they might do their courting without our seeing them. Tom was going to fling off the back-apron when the chaise drove up (I couldn't help thinking that it was queer, when the weather was so warm, that he should have it muffled

over his legs, with even the flap thrown back), but Ju said, 'No, it will be better fun presently. What pretty light trousers those are, Dick! just the thing for little boys;' and then they both laughed as if Ju had made a great joke, though I couldn't see it.

We had a very pleasant ride between fresh green hedges, and along winding lanes that were just beginning to get a little shady. Rabbits scampered across the road almost under the horse's feet; and we saw a hedgehog on the side of a ditch under a clump of dock-leaves, and the larks were singing high up over all the fields on both sides, as if they were afraid that they wouldn't have time to tell how happy they were.

But Mary and I would have enjoyed the ride much more if we hadn't been sitting together.

Molly Jenkins was waiting for us outside her cottage, and when we got down there I found out Ju's joke. Tom had got trousers too, far more grown-uplooking things than mine, with smart stripes down the seams.

'Why, you look like a gentleman growed, you do, my deary,' said Mrs. Jenkins, as she hugged her pet.

'Just like a six-foot hossifer, don't he, mem?' said the groom, as he drove off to the village inn.

Mrs. Jenkins made us all eat as if an hour's ride after breakfast must have famished us; but Tom and Ju were plainly Mrs. Jenkins's favourites. Mary and I could soon see that she was only kind to us because she would have been kind to any children, especially to any that had come with our cousins. She followed Ju and Tom about with her eyes, and kept on grinning and saying to nobody: 'Ain't it pretty to see 'em?'

Of course I knew it was pretty to see Ju, but I couldn't see anything so pretty in Tom's ways. I thought he behaved very rudely at table, picking out the butteriest and sugariest bits of sugared bread-and-butter, before even Ju was helped; but when I said so to Mary, she slapped me, and said it was only my spite.

When we had had our lunch, we all went out for a stroll in the great wood behind Mrs. Jenkins's cottage. Ju and Tom walked first, and Ju took her doll with her, and her workbag, and she said that she was going to make Dolly a new frock, and that Tom had promised to hold the stuff for her whilst she cut it out. 'I wouldn't be such a Miss Nancy,' I said; and then Iu looked up angrily, and said, 'No, you wouldn't do anything to please me; little boys are so fractious.' And Mary looked angrily at Ju and me, and even Tom, and poor happy Mrs. Jenkins, who kept on asking the trees and the toadstools if it wasn't 'pretty to see 'em?' Ju and Tom soon got away by themselves, and Mary and I, like little sillies, sulked, instead of enjoying the beautiful wood. There were A STATE OF THE STA

squirrels in it, and pheasants, and primroses, and hyacinths, and anemones, and catkins, and 'pine-apples,' and thousands of green leaves, and great beds of dead leaves that we could have tumbled each other over in; we could have been 'smothered,' and have had all kinds of prime fun, if we had not been spooney enough to be sulky.

Suddenly, when we had been sulking on in that silly fashion for an hour or so, we came out upon Ju and Tom. Tom was standing up, looking half ready to blubber, and Ju was kneeling down at his side. He had torn a great gash in his fine trousers, and Ju was sewing it up with white cotton, and telling him not to mind. 'Don't let them see you,' I heard her say, as Mary and I came up. Tom was vexed because his trousers had been torn, Ju was vexed because he had torn them, Mary was vexed to see Ju mending them, and I was vexed that Tom should have any trousers to be mended. 'It looks just as if he had tumbled into a pail of whitewash,' I said, spitefully, to Ju, as I pointed to her zigzag stitches; and Mary gave a scornful little 'Fuff.' All of us had 'the black dog' on our shoulders, when old Molly came clucking after us, like an old hen, to call us in to dinner. When we got back to her cottage, Uncle Walter was there. A letter had come by the morning's post, but had not been delivered, through a blunder, until nearly noon, to say that Aunt Annie, Ju's mamma, was so much worse that Ju must come home directly. When we heard that, how sorry Mary and I were that we had been cross with Iuwith anybody! Uncle had been to the inn, and the phaeton was waiting for us outside the cottage gate. Sam rode the horse that uncle had hired, but Sam only just kept up with us. Uncle did make Monarch go! I sat then in the front seat with Ju, but it was a very doleful ride, though I had hold of her hand, and we did go so fast. Uncle galloped right past our house and his house, straight to the coach-office; and just caught the afternoon coach from Norwich as it was changing horses. There was only one inside seat left, and no outside seat; so Uncle jumped inside, and took Ju on his knee, and off they rattled to London without even saying good-bye.

When we heard that Ju had got home too late, how sorry Mary and I were that we had laughed at her 'cat's-teeth' stitches on Tom's trousers. Tom didn't care much for anything that didn't hurt him, but even he cried a little; and Mary pitied him a great deal. And when I saw how he missed Ju—though not half a quarter as much as I did—I could not help pitying him too.



A BOY'S RHYMING EPISTLE.



Y DEAR LITTLE E.,—I wish you could be with us by the sea. But never mind, pet, your turn's to come yet. The girls and we boys will both bring you toys, and seaweed, and shells, and views of the place, and whatever they sells (but a nominative

case, if plural, should have a verb plural, you say. I don't care for that—'tisn't school-time. Hooray!) Well, now little E., if you'll listen to me, though you lie on your bed while this letter is read, by dear kind mamma, or, perhaps, by papa, you can fancy white pillows are turned to blue billows, and the blankets to sand, and the quilt to the downs, with round woods for their crowns. In short, I'm so graphic you'll soon understand, my dear little, queer little sisterkin E., the kind of a life we lead by the sea. Betimes in the morning we leap out of bed (if any one skulks, at his

sleepy old head a bolster we fling), and we're off to the shore, where the water is breaking in ripple or roar. If the tide is well up, the girls have a machine, and the drollest old women that ever were seen, in coats just like men's, give them ducks in the sea, where they splash and they splutter, and scream merrilie; and when they come out up and down the parade (or rather above it, the long esplanade) they walk in the sun to dry their wet hair, like mermaids with legs; but we boys do not care to be cooped in a lumbering old box upon wheels, so as soon as we're out, we take to our heels and race to the groynes just outside the parade, and there we undress and our toilet is made, when we've had our nice dip, or sometimes we ship ourselves and our togs on board of a boat, and the fishermen teach us to swim and to float. If a lugger comes in that has caught any fish, we buy some for breakfast; without any dish we carry them home held up by the tails, with the sun shining bright on their silvery scales. What breakfasts we eat, food seems to have feet; ham, bacon, or eggs, the longest of legs; bread and butter, or toast, or boiled beef or roast, fresh prawns or salt fish, honey, jam, marmalade, whatever the dish, runs away from the spoon or the knife and the fork—so short is the work that we make with the wittles, wee Emmy, as soon as we rush back like locusts from off the parade; there is one dish we cat not, and that is twice-laid. And some-And the second s

times we go fishing, too, and catch, well, Emmy, just a few. Of course at fishing I'm a dab, and so they take me for a brother; and I take them, poor things, but other—wise fishing isn't just our line, or with a line, or with a net, but stop, or else I shall forget that I've to find a rhyme for dab. Well, that real brother, yours and mine, brave Bill, can always catch a crab -not scurrying sideways on the shore, but out at sea, when he's an oar. And sometimes we go for a cruise in the Spray, a smart little yawl that sails out every day, and the boatmen do tell us, my dear little girl, such stories, enough, dear, to take out of curl every ringlet you have on your bright little head, and make it stand stiff as a poker with dread; yes, stories, I mean, what the Scotch folk call lees, of the wonderful things they have seen on the seas. With the coastguard we talk, too, and they will not balk, too, of their taste for a yarn, any sweet little darlings who are gaping for marvels like hungry young starlings. And donkeys and ponies we ride, and hire chaises, and drive to the downs, where the girls gather daisies, and clover, and all kinds of wonderful flowers, and the youngsters we pelt with the blossoms in showers, and startle the rooks and the rabbits and hares, and pass little cottages covered with pears, and hear the sheep's bells go now ring-a-ting, then two or three tinkles, and then a low ding, and come back to the waves lighted up by the stars, when the girls read dull

CHILD'S CORNER BOOK.

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books they've got at bazaars, and we boys—now don't tell—oh, fie!—smoke cigars.

With love to mamma, and also papa, and no end of kisses for best of wee misses (mind we soon shall come back),

I'm your fond brother,

JACK.



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